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ON:

ITS HISTORY AND MEANING

JULIA S. BLUNT.

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CONFIRMATION:

ITS HISTORY AND MEANING.

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BY

JULIA S. BLUNT,

AUTHOR OF

"READINGS ON THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER."

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TO MY GODCHILDREN
Ernest and Else

THIS LITTLE BOOK

ON

Confirmation

IS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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CONFIRMATION.

I.

"I am baptized into Thy name,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Among Thy seed a place I claim,
Among Thy consecrated host;
Buried with Christ, and dead to sin,
Thy Spirit now shall live within."

Lyra Germanica.

THE MEANING OF CONFIRMATION—ITS HISTORY—WHO
ARE INVITED TO IT—SOME OBJECTIONS FELT TO IT
ANSWERED.

WHEN the clergyman announces at church, that the Bishop proposes to hold a Confirmation in the course of the ensuing spring, and that any young person who wishes to become a candidate must give in his or her name by a certain day, it awakens at once a general interest. Those who are of an age to be confirmed, hear it with a feeling of hope, and, perhaps, of excitement, warmly participated in by those to whom their instruction is committed. While many, who have no personal concern either in the service or the candidates, hear it with at least a passing thought of their own confirmation day, of that summer morning in the years long since gone by, when they too came forward to be

confirmed as God's faithful soldiers and servants to their life's end, with, it may be, a saddened confession of how little they have lived up to their high calling since, and a hearty prayer that it shall be well with those now to be confirmed, to the end.

Thus, a Confirmation time draws out a sense of union among different ages and ranks generally, while it yet more distinctly unites those immediately concerned in it. It brings them together as members of one family, joining them in the same course of instruction, and often awakening an interest in each other's welfare, which forms a link, slight, indeed, yet not without its value in drawing together the too widely separated classes of society. This uniting influence I would specially put before you, and would ask you to come as members of one common family, that family to which our Baptism and Confirmation are alike the witness, that we may consider together its duties and privileges.

But first, What is the service which so gathers round it the thoughts and interests of young and old, rich and poor? It is the service in which God claims each child as His own—now as a conscious and responsible being, as He once claimed him in baptism when an unconscious infant. It is the entrance of a Christian upon his rightful inheritance, it is the arming of a soldier in his Master's cause; yet more, it is the outward sign and token that his Master's spirit and strength shall be with him, to confirm and strengthen him, to his life's end. Perhaps this has hardly been your idea of confirmation. If you had been asked, you would have said, "Confirmation is the act of releasing my god-fathers and godmothers from the vows which they made for me, and of taking them upon myself."

But the words at the beginning of the service distinctly show that Confirmation is the Bishop's act, not yours. It says, "The order of Confirmation, or laying on of hands on those that are baptized." Laying on of hands by a person in authority is an act, surely, conveying to your mind that you are receiving something *from* him, not conferring something on him; while the expression, "all that are to be confirmed," which immediately follows, points to the same truth. The sentence would undoubtedly be, "all those who are to confirm their vows," if the Church held that the chief end of Confirmation was the public acceptance of your vows.

An illustration may perhaps help to explain this more clearly. Suppose, for instance, the Queen, in one of her country walks through some Highland glen, had taken refuge from a storm in a cottage when the parents were rejoicing in the birth of their first child, and seeing the little infant in the cradle, had promised to restore to the child some estate once belonging to the family, but forfeited to the crown by treason; the father would naturally promise for the infant faithful, loyal service. As time goes on, and the child comes to years of discretion, and is old enough to understand the value of the gift given, and the meaning of the service promised, he is taken into the Queen's presence, and she laying her hand on his head ratifies her former gracious gift. This would be an act of confirmation on her part; at the same time, the young man would naturally confirm in his own person the vows of loyalty and service which his father had made for him, only, as at the first, the chief and important part was that of the Queen, so now again, the chief and important part would also be hers. There would be a higher act of confirmation

on her part still; for we can believe that, as she laid her hand upon the young man's head in token of the confirmation of her gifts, she would so awaken the chivalry and devotion of his nature, that she would confirm him her faithful soldier and subject to his life's end. This must be the highest kind of Confirmation; for the influence of one spirit over another, sealing it to itself, is a higher and nobler power than the mere ratifying of certain gifts, which very gifts, in coming years, the young man may give up without a regret, if his sovereign's dangers or reverses called him, in the strength of his loving loyalty, to follow her fortunes to the death.

But that we may enter better into the meaning of the highest form, whether for evil or good, in which Confirmation comes before us—that in which it refers to persons—we will consider the meaning of the terms in one or two other cases.

When a young man begins to go wrong—when the first oath has been used—the first bad company kept, and he finds a companion somewhat older than himself in point of age, and much older than himself in point of vice, and he forms a friendship with him, and learns his ways and habits, we say, “Alas! his friend has confirmed him in evil;” or again, it may be a young girl is just beginning to struggle against idle, selfish, frivolous ways, and she falls in with one, to whom she can look up and trust—one who strengthens all that is right in her, and calls out energies she never knew before that she possessed; then we say, “that was a happy friendship, it has confirmed her in the right way.” In these cases it is the spirit, the will of the friend influencing the persons—hovering round them, entering into them, and confirming them. We

may all know such instances in our own experience, or we may recall great and glorious instances of such a power in old times, of a high noble and all-enduring spirit—it may be the Pastor of the flock, it may be some young novice but lately signed and sealed Christ's faithful soldier, that has confirmed the timid and wavering in their faith, has strengthened them to witness a good confession, and has thus built them up a living sacrifice in their Master's service. These instances are illustrations to us of the full meaning of Confirmation—of God's confirming with His Holy Spirit, with His everlasting strength, each young heart that comes with a true and simple purpose to this ordinance.

Confirmation then is an ordinance in which God not only confirms to us the promises and blessings of our Baptism, not only receives from us the confirmation of our Baptismal vows, but one in which He strengthens and builds us up, ourselves, our souls and bodies, into His living temple. Having thus far ascertained the meaning of Confirmation, it may not be uninteresting to learn something of its history.

We find no command in Scripture regarding this service, but we are led to believe that it was derived from the example of the Apostles in Acts viii. 14 to 17, and in Acts xix. 1 to 7. Again, there seems little doubt that the laying on of hands spoken of in Hebrews vi. 1, 2, and evidently reckoned among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, an ordinance designed for those still weak in the faith and in the knowledge of the truth, passed soon after the Apostles' time into the rite of Confirmation. In the early Church it followed immediately upon Baptism, and therefore would not have been regarded in the light of a

profession of faith, as that had already been made in Baptism ; but it was evidently the great Christian ordinance in which, and through which, the Spirit was claimed for the new convert. We must remember that it was chiefly to adults that Baptism was at first administered ; for the Church gathered in her early members as converts, rather than claimed them as children, there was therefore no reason for disuniting the services, nay rather, inasmuch as the gift of the Holy Ghost was the especial gift of the new dispensation, there was every reason for uniting them as part of the inheritance on which the convert entered. That Confirmation was also administered in the case of infants was in accordance with the feeling of the early Church, that led her to look upon it rather as the sign and token of that which God was giving to the newly baptized, than as any profession or act of theirs. As, however, time went on, and the Church was gradually established, its members being no longer adults brought in from the Pagan world, but the Christian children of Christian parents, Infant Baptism became the universal custom ; and with this there arose in the Latin Church a severance of the two services. By the eighth century Confirmation in the Western Churches was postponed to some years after Baptism, though still administered at a comparatively early age. In the Eastern Churches, however, Infant Confirmation is even now retained, Baptism being followed immediately by anointing with holy oil.

We find Tertullian at the end of the second century speaking of Baptism thus :—"After Baptism succeeds laying on of hands, by prayer calling for and inviting the Holy Ghost." Cyprian remarks, "The same thing is practised among us,

that they who are baptized in the Church are presented to the governors of it, that by their prayers and imposition of hands they may obtain the Holy Ghost." ¹ Confirmation was also the mode by which the Church received back heretics into her communion; Baptism was never repeated, but a new imposition of hands often took place.²

At the Reformation there were conflicting opinions upon the importance and necessity of this ordinance. Luther, from his high views of Baptism, was inclined to reject it, considering that it threw discredit on that Sacrament. Calvin also objected, partly from the same reason, saying it would sever from Baptism the promises that belonged to it, and partly that he held it to be a superstitious ceremony.³

Confirmation was, however, retained in the German Lutheran Church, though it was greatly altered in character, and in the course of two centuries it was adopted by the Reformed Calvinistic Churches. In the German Church it is looked upon as a completion of the act of dedication to God, of which Baptism is the first step, and it is deemed so essential a part of a Christian man's profession that a certificate of its performance is required of all, before entering a trade or office, which would seem to us to destroy its voluntary character.

The English Church at the Reformation refused to retain Confirmation as a Sacrament, as held by the Roman Church, because though having the outward sign and inward grace, it had not the third requisite of a Sacrament, the being ordained by Christ himself. Neither, on the other hand, did she consider it simply as a completion of infant

¹ Bingham.

² Fleury.

³ Calvin's Institutes.

baptism, inasmuch as she required it equally in the case of adult baptism, but she restored it as far as possible to its apostolical character. As the chief ministers then went from Church to Church, confirming with the gift of the Spirit those already baptized, so our Church would now have each baptized member of her communion confirmed, once actually and visibly by the laying on of hands in token that he shall be inwardly confirmed by the Holy Spirit, not once only, but day by day, "more and more until he come into God's everlasting kingdom." In one sense we may consider it as a link between the two Sacraments instead of part of either, with a backward glance of thankfulness and acceptance at the Sacrament of Baptism, and an onward glance of introduction to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—that Sacrament which is henceforth to be with us to strengthen and support us, in the wear and tear, the burden and turmoil, the dangers and temptations of the responsible life on which we are now entering. What more we would know of the Church's intention in this ordinance, we may gather from the opening address.

The Address—

"To the end that Confirmation may minister to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, the Church hath thought good to order, that none hereafter shall be confirmed, but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and can also answer to such other questions, as in the Short Catechism are contained, which order is very convenient to be observed, to the end, that children, being now come to the years of discretion, and having learned what their God-fathers and Godmothers promised for them in

Baptism, they may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same ; and also promise, by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things, as they, by their own confession, have assented unto."

In the Prayer-books of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, the Catechism was inserted in the Service of Confirmation, but in 1661 it was separated, and what had before been the explanatory rubric before the Catechism, was turned into the address we have just read—an address which declares what is to be the groundwork, as well as the end and purport, of the instruction you receive. The Church requires such an acquaintance with the principles of the Christian faith, such an insight into your position in God's family, such an acceptance of its blessing and duties, as shall enable you with a thankful heart to make public confession of your faith and Church-membership. In this light we may say that while at Baptism you were enrolled as Christ's faithful soldiers, at Confirmation you are armed for the warfare, the colours are given into your own keeping, you are bid God speed, as you go forth on active service.

But who are those whom the Church would thus send forth ? The invitation is made to all her baptized members alike ; to all those whose foreheads were signed with the cross of Baptism, and who were thus sealed as Christ's soldiers and servants, would she now commit the weapons of their spiritual welfare. She does not say that you or I have been singled out from our neighbours, by an especial act of God's mercy, to His service, and that we are now called upon publicly to testify to His distinguishing grace, and come forward and state, why

and wherefore, we believe we are so called. If she did, we might well shrink from the act.

To live in God's presence and keeping, to serve and honour and obey Him, is, the Church considers, our natural life, as baptized members of Christ. It is not that one or two here and there are now selected to enter it; but that it is each man's true and rightful state. She knows that too many break away from it, preferring their own ways, their own sinful wills, to God's way and God's will, but she cannot narrow her family circle because men despise their birthright. She knows that even those who, like the Prodigal of old, sell all that they have, and go into a far country, are not beyond the reach of their Father's care, as many a sick bed, and many an hour of trial proves, when, as it were, "the sore famine in the land" sends back the Prodigal to his Father's house.

Therefore all are invited, as you will see by looking at the Exhortation at the end of the services for Infant Baptism, in which the duty of parents to bring each infant is clearly stated. There can then be no doubt *you* are invited, nay, expected to come to this blessed ordinance, but there may be some objections in your mind which hinder you from accepting the invitation, which I should like now to consider.

I think I am not wrong in saying, that such thoughts as these often arise—"I must be so good after Confirmation,"—"I must give up so many pleasures and amusements, just as I was about to enjoy them,"—"I must lead such a strict religious life;" or again, you have a vague alarm, that you are about to take some dreadful vows which, if you break, will make you worse off than you were before.

First, then, remember that you take no new vows

on yourself at all. Confirmation does not bring you under one fresh obligation ; you come to it that God may strengthen and establish you in the faith, privileges, and promises of your Baptism, giving you the help of His Spirit, that will enable you to live in accordance with them. But you may say, "I never asked to be baptized, I had no choice when those promises were first made ; it is very hard that I should be made answerable for them, that I should be brought into bondage whether I would or no." This takes us to the root of the matter. What is the Baptismal vow? Does it pledge you to give up one thing that you are not bound to give up, whether you had made it or not? It was not to ensnare you into an engagement to keep certain arbitrary vows, that the cross was signed on your forehead at Baptism ; it is not to enslave you now, that you are asked to come forward and accept your place in God's family. If this vow had been to bind you to any line of conduct that would hinder you from one true human enjoyment, from one manly feeling, if it made you renounce one common right of our human nature, or if it brought you under certain pains and penalties from which otherwise you were free, you might complain ; but it is not so. Except in the promised help, except in the high privileges, except in the strength imparted, Baptism and Confirmation find you as they leave you. They find you with this obligation, to live according to God's law already on you ; they leave you with strength to fulfil it. All that you are called on to renounce—the world, the flesh, and the devil—you are called on to renounce by the obligation of your birth, by the simple fact that you are living in God's world, and not in the devil's world.

Your refusal to renew your baptismal vow, or if the choice had been given you, your refusal in the first instance to accept it, would have made no difference in the consequence of breaking it. The vow is not an arbitrary vow; the results are not arbitrary results. To follow ever more and more the devil and his works,—to live ever more and more for the pomps and vanities of the world—to indulge ever more and more in the covetous, impure, carnal desires of the flesh, must have ended in death, had no vow been on you to renounce them, because “as a man soweth so shall he reap,” and the natural end of these things is death, or rather so living you are dead while you live. If you prefer death to life, you are just as free to choose it now, it will be no worse for you than it would have been before; it will indeed be more ungrateful, but if you are capable of making such a choice, this thought will give you no pain. God forbid that the loving entrance which He gave you into His family in unconscious infancy, for the purpose of helping and strengthening you, should ever be spoken of as ensnaring you to a worse fate than, without it, would have been yours.

These considerations will help us to answer those other objections—“I must be so good,”—“I must give up so many amusements,”—“I must be so strict.” If I were, to ask you to explain exactly what you mean by them, I believe you would find it hard to do so. You have just an uneasy, undefined dread that you are somehow about to promise something that will cut you off from the natural amusements of your age, and make you very dull and unlike your companions. I can again but refer you to the vow itself, entreating you to remember that it is no man’s code, or rules, or

explanations that you are asked to accept, but the vow itself—that glorious vow that shall make you God's freeman ; a vow which in your heart of hearts you must feel is a noble, right, and manly one. You promise to fight against the devil and all his works, against the father of lies, in whom all falsehood and divisions, all meanness and hatred, all oppressions and injustice are centred. You promise to fight against "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world ;" against all that is unreal and deceitful ; all that is false, and selfish, and hollow ; and, "against the covetous desires of the flesh," against all those indulgences and vices that make men lower than the brutes that perish ; against all those lusts and passions that stamp out of men's hearts and lives everything that is pure, and noble, and Godlike. The hero, whose daring courage throbbing through every pulse of a strong and stalwart frame has made him the first on the fatal rampart, need not abate one jot of his manly spirit in order to enlist in this Christian warfare, nay rather in proportion as it is a true courage, will he be ready to accept his station in Christ's army, among those "who loved not their lives unto the death ;" fighting against the tyranny of Satan, sin, and self. It is a vow that shall set you free, for it bids you renounce all those manifold forms of evil, so that "you shall not follow or be led by them." The choice put before you is, whether you shall go through life as God's child or as Satan's slave. Surely before such a vow all dread that you are about to be entrapped into a life that is weak, cowardly, and unmanly,—all fear that you shall have to live in God's world as an automaton, afraid ever to speak, or act, or enjoy yourself honestly, and heartily, must vanish, for it is a vow that brings you into the liberty of

the sons of God ; into that state in which "all things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

II.

"Train thyself betimes with care
For the conflict thou wouldst share,
Cast aside whate'er could be
Hindrance to thy victory."

Lyra Germanica.

THE PREPARATION REQUIRED FOR CONFIRMATION—ON
ATTENDING CLASSES—ON PERSONAL PREPARATION—
ON TIMES FOR PRAYER—ON SELF-EXAMINATION—ITS
DANGERS—SOME SUGGESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT.

I HAVE tried at the close of the last chapter to answer one or two objections that I know arise in some minds. But I do not think that by any means the larger number of those among you, who are old enough to be confirmed, and who have heard the invitation given, will shrink from accepting it. There is a certain hopefulness and trustfulness at your age, that often leads you to accept, almost without a question, such an invitation. Besides this, with many, Confirmation is considered a necessary part of education, as indeed it is ; and so they go to it almost as a matter of course. But while it is true that we cannot look upon it too much as a necessary part of our education, that is coming to each of us in turn, and by no means singling us out from among our companions ; still we must not forget that it is also a free, voluntary, deliberate act on our part ; that it is to be the act of those only who have come to

years of discretion, and are, therefore, capable of weighing and understanding what they do. Before you can take so important a step, a certain preparation must be necessary; what kind of preparation it shall be, the Church, as we saw, told us in the opening address. It has reference to two points—that you be rightly instructed in *respect of knowledge*—that you be truly in earnest in *respect of feeling*. For the former, the Church especially requires that you know the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, with the Catechism; for the latter, that you so understand and enter into your Baptismal Covenant, that you are honestly intending to observe it faithfully.

The season of preparation for Confirmation is a most valuable time if you will thoroughly and thoughtfully use it. It is impossible in so small a book as this, to give you more than a few hints on the subject; I propose, therefore, in the four next chapters to go through the several heads of instruction mentioned in the Church's opening address, and in this, to speak generally on the subject of preparation itself. In most parishes, classes are opened for the careful and regular instruction of candidates, and those amongst you who are engaged in daily work will find all the time you can get fully occupied in attending them and preparing the answers that may be required; indeed, I know how difficult it is often for you to do even this, and that it requires a strong effort, after the day's work, to attend regularly these classes. When the novelty of the first time or two is past, it is so easy to find an excuse—you have been kept a little later at work, then a very little gossiping and dawdling by the way makes it so late that you do not like to go in after the class has begun, and once allowing that it

is possible not to attend, makes it easier to be careless about it the next time ; then comes a little annoyance at having your absence commented on, and when the course is over it may be you have attended so irregularly, that your name is marked off, or you have lost all interest in the subject, and you think you will wait for the next opportunity, when you will be older, and it may be more in earnest about it. Now while most thoroughly feeling with you the real labour it is to you, both regularly to attend, and properly to prepare for these classes, I would put it to you in this way : you have not, from the circumstances of your life, the opportunity to gain all the benefits others may derive from this preparation time ; you cannot procure for yourself the books, even if you could understand them, that I shall mention hereafter as being useful to those who have more time for preparation, but what you thus lose in point of knowledge, may be made up to you in the strengthening discipline of this time. It is a greater effort to you than to others to prepare at all ; the very self-denial, then, will bring its own reward. If you have, during these few months, had the resolution to give up your evening's leisure ; if you have had the courage to quit your companions as you leave work, and go home, either to prepare for, or attend the class ; if you have given up any little gaiety for the same purpose, besides the benefit of the instruction, you will have gained a strength of purpose that shall help you long after the Confirmation is over. Remember the loving acceptance which the widow's mite received—"She hath cast in more than they all," our Saviour said ; and what is true of her almsgiving, shall be true of your time-giving, because in your case as in David's of old,

you are not giving of that which cost you nothing. To those among you able and willing to attend regularly, I would only suggest that you guard against being carried away with merely the excitement of the outward preparation ; more or less it breaks in pleasantly upon the usual routine of life ; to you it is an agreeable change to attend classes, and talk over and prepare the answers, and it may be discuss the qualifications of the other candidates ; and all this has a tendency to withdraw you from that quiet meditation and thought which is after all the truest preparation. Again, to those among you who have both time and books at your disposal, I would suggest that besides the instruction you receive from your ministers, and which in most cases refers chiefly to the doctrines of your faith, you would find this a most suitable opportunity for reading two or three books of Church History, with care and attention,—reading them not only to pass an hour pleasantly and profitably, but really to acquire a ground-work of information that shall always be of use to you. Remember, that in Confirmation, you make not only a public confession of your faith, but also a public profession of your Church-membership, and you surely ought to know something of the history of the Church whose blessings you are receiving. It will be, I think, much more interesting to you to study it with this object, than as a mere lesson to get up for an examination. The prayer in which the Bishop will ask for God's Spirit to rest on you, has been for 1,500 years asked over the heads of each generation, as they came forward to take their place in the ranks of the Christian Church ; surely you will like to learn how so rich a heritage as our Church Service was handed down to us. You will

have a personal feeling, as it were, in tracing your Church's history, from those far-off days almost lost in the dim twilight, when its first foundations were laid, through its changeful seasons of struggle and combat, of high and noble deeds, of worldly prosperity and growing superstition, of reformation and renewed life,—down to its present hour of trial. The books I would mention are all of so reasonable a price, as to be within the reach of most of those I am speaking to now, and perhaps are already on your shelves; but even if they have been read as a lesson, I would ask you to read them now as a matter of personal interest, or if you have not time to read all, to make a selection from this list:

Longman's Epochs of Church History. 2s. 6d.

Plummer's Church of the Early Fathers.

Carr's Church of the Roman Empire.

Perry's History of the Reformation in England.

Professor Blunt's Reformation.

Proctor on the Common Prayer.

That you may judge for yourselves the kind of preparation which seems fit and useful, before entering upon the privileges of your Christian inheritance, I would ask you to take an example from daily life.

In some one of England's country villages, festive preparations are being made for the coming of age of the young heir of the estate. In many respects it is an important possession; not only large farms lie on it, but coal mines and iron works add to its value, while disputed rights and conflicting interests, doubtful tenures and intricate deeds, add elements of difficulty in the way of the young heir. He has grown up with the knowledge of his position, and is enjoying many of its advantages. If wisely educated, the requirements of his future station will not have been overlooked; but before actually

taking possession, would you not expect him to acquaint himself more thoroughly with what he is about to enter on, in order to fit himself for it? His title-deeds you are sure would be examined, the requirements and capabilities of the estate would be all naturally matters of earnest inquiry, while beyond this, the sense of coming responsibility ought to deepen, strengthen, and steady his whole character. He must be a boy no longer if he is to fill wisely and well his position in life; and perhaps as you think of all the difficulties with which he has to contend you confess that this personal preparation is the most important part. Firmness, gentleness, decision of character, self-control, and kindness of heart, will stand him in good stead in the guidance of his affairs. What will the most accurate knowledge of them be without these? If the cheers that greet him are not to turn to curses; if the kindly welcome is not to die out in bitter complaint; if, when the time comes, he is to give up his account with joy, it is not only what he *knows*, but what he *is*, that is of importance.

This example may give you an insight into what I mean by preparation. It is not that now, for the first time, it is necessary to think of these things; like the young heir, I hope you will have known about them all your life, and grown up in them; but as you are about to set out fresh in the Christian life, as you are about to enter into its full privileges, it is well to have a time to make ready for this new state. The illustration also points us to the double nature of the preparation which the Church proposes to you, which is, to have reference both to your knowledge and to your character. I have spoken of the first only—the knowledge that shall make your profession of faith a reasonable

act ; the more vitally important part remains for us to consider—that which has reference to your own character and personal feeling. First, I would observe that this part of the preparation must be your own work, that while you may receive much outward help, it will all be useless if you do not grasp it, and act on it, and make it your own. Information may be imparted to you—steadfastness cannot be. With the increased number of religious books, and helps of all kinds, it is almost hard to realize that the whole work is not done for you. You will be tempted to think that all you have to do is to accept the help, read about the feelings you ought to have, listen to the instruction, and, it may be, use the questions of self-examination proposed, and that you are then rightly prepared. Nay, you may easily go beyond this, and catch a good deal of the earnestness of those who are teaching you. It will often be hard to say how much of your strength and vigour you owe to the spirit of those from whom you learn ; how much of your warmth and devotion is only the reflected light of those who instruct you. You may find that it is not the sun itself that has been shining on you, but only that you have been, as it were, for a while standing within the focus of a mirror, and have mistaken its reflected rays for true sunlight ; when, however, you move on your way, you will be surprised and disappointed to find that the brightness is not travelling with you, it has died out, and you are colder and duller than before. I remember once seeing the bright rays of the morning sun thrown in upon a sunless room from a mirror on which the sun was shining, sending a bright flickering light on its walls and ceiling, and if you had gone into it then, and had not known its aspect, you might

have been deceived by its cheerfulness, but it was no real light, and the moment the mirror was removed it died out, leaving the room more cheerless than it was before. Thus will it be with your warmth and devotion if it is only caught from the excitement around, or the devotion of those with whom you are brought in contact. You must be sooner or later thrown, as regards all human help, on yourself. Very likely in the first strong temptation that besets you, you will find yourself alone. What will you do then, if you have been trusting to borrowed light to guide you,—to temporary strength to support you? Remember the meaning of the word preparation; the end and object of it, surely, is to make us ready for what is coming, not to lead us to depend on its temporary assistance. You will be given much help and instruction now,—you will be brought under more direct personal influence for a time, to strengthen you to do without it afterwards. Do not mistake the *means* for the *end*, but use the helps wisely and well, not learning to lean on them, but learning to do without them. I have so often seen the sad results of the opposite course, that I cannot help warning you;—the excitement of having a personal influence over you, acts like a hot-bed upon your religious feelings—and they grow up rapidly, only, however, to droop and die away gradually when you go back to the shade of common life; or, which is perhaps worse, you pass from one religious excitement to another, for ever claiming the personal interest and help of others in your state of mind, growing more and more artificial, and less able to detect it, till some great sorrow or some unexpected fall shows you to yourself in all your weakness and unreality. The truest strength, the

surest help, comes to us alone, for alone we may enter into the presence of God, and be filled with His Spirit and power that shall never fail us.

Yet as this is especially a time of training and teaching, a time when you have a right to look for more direction than would always be good for you ; I would say—gather up carefully for your own use any suggestions that are made to help you in your devotions, or for your daily life, and fit them to your own circumstances, for this no one can do but yourself. The simpler your rules are, the better ; you may begin with elaborate rules and plans, but you will never go on with them, and I am afraid that when once you begin to break them, you will be more inclined to put them aside altogether than to simplify and re-arrange them. It is not only to-day or to-morrow, remember, that you hope to live a Christian life, but always ; and therefore it is well to be wise, and not overload yourself with plans that may be very well for a week, or a month, but will become an irksome bondage before the year is out.

The subject of prayer itself will come before us by and by, but I would speak here of certain rules, with regard to time, that may be helpful. To many of you, a few minutes, morning and evening, is absolutely all the time you can outwardly command for prayer ; but this very fact may help to make you more in earnest, and resolute, than those who have more time to spare. If you are made watchful and resolute, knowing that if you lose that time you lose all, then its very shortness will be a blessing. It is also quite possible for you to fix some stated hour in the day, of which the clock striking shall remind you, when, for a few minutes, you may recollect yourself, and call to mind that

you are in the presence of God. This will often give a check to evil, for, if there is anything wrong, the thought of God's presence will surely jar upon you, while a silent prayer to Him will give you strength to start afresh for the rest of the day.

If your time is your own, your case is different, and you ought not to be satisfied with so slight an act of worship; still, I would say, avoid making a snare for yourself by multiplying hours of devotion, to which there is sometimes a tendency in the first beginning of a more earnest life. One fixed time in the day for devotion, as a stated rule, in addition to the morning and evening hour, is generally as much as you will find you can profitably use or long continue. But let this be really a fixed time, and not put aside for slight difficulties. It may sometimes find you in an undue state of anxiety about an amusement, or keenly feeling a passing disappointment, or much annoyed at a slight offence that was never intended; then the effort to go quietly into your own room for a few minutes, even if you have great difficulty in collecting your thoughts for more than a formal act of worship, is not without its use. Again, however busy you may be, if it is reasonably possible for you to keep the hour you fixed on for private prayer, you will not find the time so spent lost, even in the day's work. The increased calmness and strength so attained will far more than compensate for the time taken from your employment,—always remembering, however, that there is no magic charm in such rules and hours, and no good to be obtained from them, except as they help to give a higher tone to the day's work and pleasure.

The strengthening, and steadying, and deepening of your whole character, is what you must put before

you as one great object in your preparation for Confirmation, and for this you must learn to know yourselves. It is necessary that you should know the tendency of your own characters, and the faults that threaten to become habits, or they may gather strength from day to day, while you are wrapped in the self-complacent idea that you are making great advances in the Christian life; and, for this end, self-examination is a most needful part of your preparation.

Before, however, entering upon the subject itself, there are one or two dangers attending it, in some cases, that I would point out. To you who have more time at your disposal than you know what to do with, more devotional books than you can read, and more questions for self-examination than you can answer,—there is this great danger, that your thoughts may be so fixed on yourself, that you become miserably unreal and artificial, and that you begin to think that the little variations in your feelings, hopes, and fears, from day to day, are the most important things in the world. Do not then begin by trammelling yourself with petty rules and regulations, or you will find you are unable to walk alone. Your life has often so little of outward action in it, that it has, at all times, a tendency to make you overvalue trifles, and to be so occupied with small things, that you overlook the greater and more important ones. Remember that it is possible to be in the habit of minutely weighing this word and that word—this feeling and that feeling—while the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and truth are overlooked. Again, there is this further danger to some characters, that they will not be satisfied with their own answers in this minute self-examination; and they will be tempted

to ask this person and that person to help them to settle their scruples, till they have no freedom left.

From all these dangers of undue self-scrutiny, those of you who are at work from eight o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock at night are free. You have to come in contact with too many real evils to be likely to make imaginary ones; you have enough to do to keep before you the broad line of honesty, uprightness, and purity, to be in any danger of going into little variations of feeling and shades of character. Yet self-examination is a plain and important duty for all; let us, then, consider how best you may all fulfil it. To you who have little time to give to it, and especially to boys, to whom self-scrutiny is generally very irksome, I would say, that one or two broad questions, which you will honestly and distinctly answer, are far more useful than a longer list puzzled over without coming to any heartfelt conclusion,—one or two questions, I mean, such as these: “Do I care, in the very least, that what is good and true shall get the victory over what is bad and false? Do I care, in fact, for the triumph of Him whose soldier I am about to be confirmed? Do I honestly believe that my words, and thoughts, and actions, are things of which God takes account,—that He really sees and cares whether I am fighting against sin, the world, and the devil, or whether I am doing their bidding? Do I ever think that following my own way, being selfish, unfair, unkind, vindictive, passionate, proud, cowardly, and untrue, is doing the devil’s bidding, and that what I am doing now is stamping itself on my character for life—perhaps for ever?” It is so easy to hear certain religious truths as a matter of course, and to repeat them as a matter of course, and to forget them as a matter

of course, that breaking them up into direct questions, and forcing yourself to answer them, is often the only way of taking hold of them; and however little it may suit the natural impatience of your spirit, or however difficult you may find it to get time for seriously considering them, I would earnestly advise your doing so. While, from time to time, to oblige yourself honestly to consider your ways, and to take a survey of the features of your daily life—how much of falsehood, self-gratification, injustice, and unkindness to others, laxity of principle in your general conduct, is creeping in—will, with God's help, put you on your guard, and make you draw back before the evil has become a habit. Say that you will do this on your birthday, and on Good Friday, as a rule, not to the exclusion of its being done at other times, if some circumstances make you feel that you are drifting away among rocks and sands that will wreck you altogether if you do not take your soundings.

For the general attainment of that knowledge of self, that shall teach you what most to watch against, and what most to strive after, I should say to those who are in danger of falling into the evils attending undue self-examination, look to the actual facts of your daily life, if you will take an honest estimate of your life, as it passes in its daily routine; you will not be very long in judging from what goes on there, where the chief evil and weakness of your character lie. Whether the self-indulgence which gladly leaves to any one, except yourself, the little irksome duties of the day; whether the vain love of admiration that makes you take chief delight in the company of those that gratify it; whether the jealousy that shows itself in envious depreciation of others, and an exacting

demand of affection and attention towards yourselves, are the evils that most beset you; or whether you have more to fear from falseness and insincerity in your daily intercourse with others, from heedless inconsideration, from impatience of control, or from a proud desire of influence and rule. I think, practically, that if you will try it, you will find that it is from without, that you will learn what it is necessary to know about yourself. We often do not see ourselves when we sit down to contemplate our state of mind, for we make up an imaginary self from what we find our books of examination expect us to be; but the chance word of a friend, the unpleasant truth uttered in haste by a companion, even the way in which we are left undisturbed, while the troubles and petty requirements of the younger ones are taken to some one more ready of help and sympathy; these are things about which there can be no mistake. Very homely and uninteresting the faults so discovered may be, but they are real ones, and may direct us to the root of the evil that is working in us, far better than setting down against ourselves grand words of self-condemnation, or adopting the confessions and experiences of others, in totally different circumstances to our own.

The self-examination then that is based on watchfulness over our daily acts as they are done, and, as it were, forms a running commentary on them at the time, seems to me the truest as well as the safest—"I suppose I have just got to keep a sharp look ahead," was a boy's summing up of the matter, and it is one I would especially commend to boys.

Above all remember this, that if you are trying to live from day to day in God's presence, you will learn to know instinctively when you are going

wrong. The words and actions which contradict the pureness, the truthfulness, the love, and strength, and gentleness of the life of Christ, who is our example, will not be said or done without an inward warning given, just as in your home-life, you know instinctively what jars upon the feelings and wounds the heart of a dear friend.

The deepest knowledge of self to which we can attain comes not from questioning and weighing of this fault and that fault, but it comes to us from knowing more and more of God. It was the vision of the King in His glory; it was the song of the Seraphim—"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts," that led the prophet to exclaim, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." "In such a revelation," it has been truly said, "it is not this or that particular offence; no, not a multitude of particular offences that overwhelm us; it is the feeling of a root of bitterness, not I have done this or that wrong act, but I *am* wrong." Such a knowledge of self goes deeper than any list of wrong-doings can penetrate; it silences self-accusing and self-excusing alike, for as we look from ourselves to the King in His glory—to the perfect holiness of God, we are fain to exclaim, "the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint." It is such a knowledge of self as this—that God is teaching us when through the sorrows and trials of life we are brought near to Him; it is such a knowledge of self as this, that will enable us fully to enter into the prayer of the Holy Communion "that we may so eat the body and drink the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and

our souls washed in His most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us."

We have now glanced at the chief points of a right and true preparation for the ordinance of Confirmation, and find that it consists in such a knowledge of your Church's doctrines and your Church's history as shall make you an intelligent member of the same ; in such a knowledge of your Christian faith as shall make you a reasonable professor of its creeds ; in such a knowledge of your baptismal covenant as shall make you ready and willing to accept its vows ; and in such a knowledge of self as shall lead you to look to the strong for strength, and rest not on yourself, but upon that "Fatherly hand that shall ever be over you, and in that Holy Spirit that shall ever be with you till you come to the life everlasting."

III.

"Now thank we all our God,
 With heart and hands and voices,
 Who wondrous things has done,
 In whom His world rejoices ;
 Who from our mother's arms
 Hath bless'd us on our way,
 With countless gifts of love,
 And still is ours to-day."—*Lyra Germanica*.

THE CATECHISM—THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT—A MEMBER OF CHRIST, A CHILD OF GOD, AN INHERITOR OF THE KINGDOM—THE BAPTISMAL VOW—DUTIES AND BLESSINGS THE SAME THING—ON RENOUNCING THE DEVIL, THE WORLD, AND THE FLESH.

WE now come to the instruction which the Church requires to be given to each candidate previous to Confirmation. The opening address in the

service says, that, "To the end that Confirmation may be administered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, the Church hath thought good to order that none hereafter shall be confirmed but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can also answer to such other questions as in the short Catechism are contained."

If you look at the Catechism you will see that the first three subjects mentioned—the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments—are all found in the Catechism, and are placed there in their proper order for a Christian child's instruction; it will therefore be better and more interesting to consider them there instead of taking them first under separate heads. The clergy, as early as 1536, received injunctions to teach the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Commandments, sentence by sentence, to the people, and as soon as Edward VI. came to the throne a catechetical exposition of Christian truth was set forth by authority. At first this Catechism ended with the explanation of the Lord's Prayer, and as we have seen, formed a part of the Confirmation service, but in 1604 the part on the Sacraments was added, and in 1661 the Catechism was inserted separately in the Prayer Book.

In considering the Catechism, I do not intend to go through it answer by answer, which would be rather the way to take it in first teaching it to children; but concluding that you have already been taught it, to treat it now in its general bearing on Confirmation, and in the progressive character of its teaching. This will be done, I think, most simply and clearly by dividing it into three heads—

1. The Baptismal Covenant.
2. The Baptismal Vow.
 - I. Renunciation.
 - II. Christian Faith—The Creed.
 - III. Christian Obedience—The Ten Commandments.
3. The means of Grace offered to help us to keep this vow. The Lord's Prayer, and the Holy Sacraments.

i. The Baptismal Covenant—

The Catechism assumes the fact of your Baptism as infants, for on it, its whole instruction depends. It is because you were then brought into God's family and into Christ's Church, that you are bidden to declare your faith in God the Father, Son, and Spirit; that you are taught God's law, the duty of Prayer, and the meaning of the Sacraments. We must therefore first assure ourselves of our right to this privilege,—of our right to be admitted in unconscious infancy into Covenant with God, before we go on to consider the Covenant itself.

We establish this right on the revelation which God made of His will on this subject in the old dispensation, and on the declaration which Christ made of His will respecting it in the new dispensation. It may be well to consider the weight of these authorities. When God first called His visible Church in Abraham He ordained the rite of circumcision, whereby children of eight days old became partakers of the covenant made with him and his seed after him for ever.

Four hundred years after this, a great change passed over the visible Church by the giving of the law, but we find no change in God's will on this point, for in the Mosaic, as in the earlier Church, infants

were made partakers of the covenant ; thus circumcision was an ordinance in which God once for all revealed the perfect freeness of His gifts to men. It was not for their excellence as a nation that God had called the Jews into His visible Church, for they were a stiff-necked people ; neither was it for what they were, as individuals, that He received them into covenant with Himself, but for the oath that he swore unto Abraham. When in the fulness of time, the next great change came over God's Church and the blessing of the covenant was extended to the Gentile as well as to the Jew, do we anywhere find that He withdrew from the Christian Church a privilege given to Abraham and confirmed to Moses ? Nowhere,—the ordinance was subjected to some outward alterations suited to the Church's new conditions, but that was all. We have St. Paul's authority for claiming our right to Abraham's privilege. "If ye be Christ's," he says, "then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise," surely, therefore, partakers of Abraham's covenanted right. The vineyard of the Lord, we must never forget, is still the same vineyard, though let out to other husbandmen. The good olive tree was never rooted up, the unfruitful branches were broken off, and the wild Gentile branches were grafted in, but the tree remained the same.

Why then should the blessing which belonged to it, when first planted, be withdrawn now ? It is so unlikely that the fuller and Catholic covenant should in this important particular be narrower and more circumscribed than the old and exclusive covenant had been, that nothing short of a direct withdrawal of God's former command of receiving infants into His Church ought to satisfy us that

such was His intention. This we nowhere find ; but if you say I cannot be satisfied without some direct sanction of the practice in the new dispensation, then turn to the declaration which Christ made of His will on the point.

We read that when infants, still in arms, were brought to Him, His disciples rebuked those who brought them. No doubt they thought their Master's time and attention too precious to be wasted on babes,—that He had higher work to do. They had not objected to the little child whom Jesus had called and placed in the midst of them ; he was old enough to understand and obey the call—but these infants, what good could it do them ? Babes that would not so much as remember in years to come the face of the stranger that had beamed upon them ; that could feel no gratitude for His notice, no care for His blessing, no appreciation of His love. It was inconsiderate folly or positive superstition that had induced their parents to bring them. What did their Master say ? We read that He was greatly displeased, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven ;" then with His loving arms He embraced them, laid His hands upon them and blessed them ; nor was this all, for He adds, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." As though He would say—"You would keep these infants from Me. I tell you not only that of such is the kingdom of heaven, but more—that it is only as you resemble them that you can yourselves be admitted. You are thinking of the great things you shall do for Me, to fit you for a high place there ; 'Lo, we have left all and followed Thee,

what shall we have therefore?' is the thought in your heart, but I tell you that it is not what you do for Me, but what I do for you, that gives you so much as an entrance there." These words of our Lord seem to raise the significance of the whole act. It is no longer only of the children there brought for His personal blessing that He speaks, when He tells His disciples "of such is the kingdom of heaven," but in accepting them, and outwardly and visibly with His arms receiving them, He was accepting, He was receiving the little ones of all future generations, and confirming the covenant made to Abraham and his seed after him for ever. For if little children are thus held up by our Saviour as the models for adults, can we conceive that the models themselves would be excluded? If the state of childhood is made again and again the type of the state into which we must all enter, to be accepted of God, is it possible that the very type itself is rejected? Does not the language of our Saviour teach us, not only that infant baptism was allowed by Him, but that it is in infant and not in adult baptism that we see the Sacrament in its true condition? the one which was especially in our Saviour's mind when He sent his disciples to go and baptize all nations.

The circumstance stated in the Acts of the Apostles of their baptizing, not only the convert himself, but "his whole house," leads us to believe that they had so understood Christ's reception of little children on the further shore of Jordan, and that as their eyes rested on the children of the convert, remembering how their Master had declared, "of such was the kingdom of heaven," they received them in His name as partakers of the blessing.

God only requires that no bar be wilfully put to the reception of His gifts, which are free and undeserved ; and what bar can unconscious infancy put when of sin and unbelief it knows nothing ? Repentance and Faith are needed in adult baptism, not in the way of merit, but simply to remove the bar that sin and unbelief would form to the reception of God's gifts, but as in infancy sin and unbelief are not known, faith and repentance cannot be needed. The bar is withdrawn in the one case, there is no bar to be withdrawn in the other.

We are sure that if the child die, his unconsciousness of all spiritual things will not prevent his being gathered into the Church triumphant, why then should the same unconsciousness prevent his being received into the Church militant ? "Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe that God hath favourably received this infant," says our Church, of each unconscious babe brought to holy baptism. "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways : for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts ;" therefore is He willing to receive the children of His love into His fold before they can know Him or understand the value of their inheritance. Thus infant baptism is a perpetual witness to us of the perfect freeness of God's gifts even as circumcision was to the Jews.

Our right to this baptismal covenant being established, we must consider what the covenant is. The answer in the Catechism tells us—it teaches us that baptism is that ordinance "wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." We are received into Christ's body, the Church ; we are

adopted into God's family; we have the blessing and gifts of the new covenant bestowed upon us; our portion in the redemption of Christ is visibly given and sealed to us. Baptism, therefore, appropriates to each individual all that Christ did for the world; it is, the Catechism says, "a means whereby he receives the same, as well as a pledge to assure him thereof."

The Catechism tells you first that you are made "a member of Christ," because it is only in and through Christ that you are brought into relationship with God. We speak of our baptism also as our christening; we speak of all baptized persons as Christians, because they have been made members of Christ. We speak of the name given us at baptism as our Christian name, because it is given us when Christ claims us as His. Our surname we inherit from our parents, it is our parents' name; our Christian name is given us as individuals when we are admitted into the family of God, and become His children. For Christ is the only-begotten Son, if then you are made a member of Christ, you are through Him and in Him made a child of God. You are baptized into Christ, "and by one Spirit you are all baptized into one body,"¹ "even His Church; being made one with Him, who is the living head from which all the body and joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."² The infant is not always to remain an infant; in time he may be taught his Father's name and will, but he must be "a member of Christ," with His Spirit to help him, before he can even try "to walk worthy of his high calling." The branch must be in the vine before the sap can

¹ Gal. iii. 27.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13.

spread through it to enable it to bear fruit, so God grafts him into the true vine, even in infancy, that he may have the power of growing up into the character of a child of God.

The catechism goes on to teach you that you were also made "a child of God." What is the natural idea awakened in your mind by the word child? Surely first and simply that of relationship. When an infant is born into a family, the love and affection it calls forth is not because of its character; it is not because it is clever, or good, or beautiful, that it is loved, but because of its relationship. You care for it and feel differently towards it from what you feel towards other infants, simply because it is the child of your sister or your friend. In this case the word child awakens no thought of character, but simply of relationship. In a like way, when we speak of these infants being made children of God, we speak simply of their relationship and not of their character; God accepts us in baptism into relationship with Himself; we become children of God by adoption; we may speak to Him as our covenanted Father.

We are also made "Inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." Every member of Christ is a child of God, and every child of God is an heir of the kingdom,—“If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”¹ All the promises and gifts of the new dispensation God offers freely to each child, aye, all that “eye hath not seen nor ear heard;” all “that prophets and kings desired to see and did not see” are his rightful inheritance. At Baptism he is naturalized into the kingdom of heaven, he is made free of the city of God; at Confirmation he takes up his freedom; he

¹ Rom. viii. 17.

accepts his position ; he more fully enters on his inheritance.

The birthright, therefore, is yours ; you have but to use it to become, in character as well as in relationship, sons of God, and then the "Spirit shall bear witness with your spirits that you are the children of God." If you reject your blessings, if you scorn them even as the Prodigal did, wandering further and further from God, having, it may be, never cared for Him or served Him, till you lose yourself in vice and misery, the only hope of your ever retracing your steps is in the truth that your Baptism witnesses to you, that even there God is your Father, so that, like the Prodigal, you may say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father."

To guard you as far as possible from acting so base a part, from scorning and rejecting your baptismal covenant, your godfathers and godmothers undertook for you your baptismal vow.

2. The Baptismal Vow.

"What did your godfathers and godmothers promise for you? They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the Articles of the Christian faith. And, thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life."

The Church in this baptismal vow seeks to secure to the child the full enjoyment of his baptismal covenant. For this she bids him renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and for this she educates him in the Christian faith and in God's law. It is not that having taught us the blessedness of the covenant, and the great things God has

done for us in it, in making us His children, members of Christ and heirs of the kingdom, that there now come as a "set off" against these privileges, our duties and responsibilities. She does not tell us that we cannot have these good gifts of God without having certain sacrifices to make; that we ought not to expect to enjoy the blessings of religion without being willing to observe its requirements, as though they were two things opposed to each other. No; thank God, we learn no such untrue distinctions from our Church. Our baptismal requirements are also our baptismal blessings, and its responsibilities are one with its gifts. Why are we made "members of Christ"? but that we may be lifted out of the bondage of the flesh;—and "sons of God"? but that Satan may not have dominion over us;—and "heirs of the kingdom"? but that our eyes may be opened to behold "the King in His glory," that we may see the things unseen and eternal, that we may be delivered from the slavery of the things of sense. Yet sometimes we are tempted to talk as though the blessings of religion were one thing, and the duties and requirements of religion quite another thing, not indeed to be fulfilled grudgingly, for that would be ungrateful we say, but still to be fulfilled in return for the blessings received instead of being the very blessings themselves. Sometimes even we wish the standard of our high calling were lower, we wish that we could be sure of our salvation and yet retain some favourite sins; we consider how far we can go in self-indulgence without jeopardy to our souls, as though salvation were a thing to be bargained for instead of a state to be lived in. To be pure and loving and holy, even as Christ was pure and loving and holy, is salvation, for salvation

means deliverance—deliverance from sin, Satan, and self. Holiness to the Lord, then, is not the penalty we have to pay for being saved, but *it is* salvation.

Renunciation, Faith, and Obedience are the ground-work of this baptismal vow, the vow which at confirmation you make your own. That the “I do” with which before God and His Church you accept this vow, may come with a hearty, earnest, hopeful goodwill from your heart, let us try and look at it together in its true light, as binding you to no arbitrary system, as forging no chains to enslave you, but as making you God’s freemen. Let us see that it is not asking you to give God, as it were, some equivalent for His good gifts to you, but only to do that which is in itself your highest good.

“First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works.” It may be that there are times when you will be sorely tempted to do Satan’s bidding, when you will long to do his works; when pride makes the haughty defiance, the presumptuous and arrogant answer very sweet; when hatred makes revenge dear; when fear makes falsehood seem most desirable, and arrogance, revenge, and falsehood are pre-eminently the devil’s works. Yet until such works as these, which God forbid, have become your daily, hourly works, you feel in your heart that it would be a horrible thing to you to accept the evil one as your acknowledged master. Just ask yourself what you would say if this baptismal vow were to be reversed, and you were bidden to renounce God as your king and accept Satan. Do you not know very well that in such a day you would surely die—die to everything true, and noble, and righteous, and blessed, and human—die to the only life worth living—and live only

to hatred, malice, cowardice, passion, and lies? There is no bondage, then, in bidding you "renounce the devil and all his works."

You have been born into God's world—into that world which He made very good at the first—with the starry heavens above your head, and the green grass beneath your feet—with the everlasting hills around you, with scenes of beauty and loveliness far and near, and in that world there is an order and rule which He administers. The heavens above and the earth beneath obey that rule, they have no power to do otherwise; but to you the choice of a free service is given, and there is an usurper abroad—a tyrant who would claim you for his subject. Has he any right to you? Is it his world? Are you his creature? Does he care for you, provide for you, desire your good? No; he does none of these things. He is your adversary, "seeking whom he may devour." Was it not right that the first act done in your name—that now the first act you do for yourself, should be to renounce this base usurper, to acknowledge your Creator, Father, and Redeemer as your King?

If it be right to renounce the usurper himself, it is right also to renounce "his works." But to what does this clause especially refer? Is not all sin included under the works of the devil? Yes, surely; but there is a class of sins which are peculiarly his works: while the world and the flesh, which we are afterwards bidden to renounce, are more his snares and temptations than actually his works. Pride, hatred, falsehood, defiance of God, divisions, temptation of others, these are, in very deed and truth, the works of him "who was a murderer from the beginning"—who is the father of lies—the accuser of the brethren—the tempter.

We must remember that not only are these his works, but that all those beginnings of evil also that lead to them are his. Irreverence, which is the first step to blasphemy; mocking words at religion, which is the first step to profaneness, and both to defiance of God; anger and jealousy, which is the first step to hatred and murder; prevarication, which is the first step to lying—all these are not the less *his* works because he has worse in reserve for you to do, as you advance along his path. Above all, scornful rejection of rightful authority, false accusations of others, leading or trying to lead your companions into wrong doing, hindering them in right doing, bear upon them the very impress of Satan's character.

The works of the devil are the works of one who is contesting the world with God. It is in this character that he tempts you to put your will before God's will, to be presumptuous, vain and arrogant, and self-pleasers; it is in this character that he would undermine your loyalty by irreverence, profaneness, and light words about sin—that he would have you tempt others if, by any means, one soul more may be seduced from his fidelity to his rightful King. Are you then ready, on your Confirmation morning, to say of works such as these, meeting you as they do in daily life, and of him who would lead you into them, "I renounce them all."

"The pomps and vanity of this wicked world." Satan is called, in Scripture, "the god of this world," "the prince of this world:" he uses its pomps and vanity as his snares and temptations. They are not his works, he knows their emptiness, they are nothing to him. He laughs to scorn the deluded ones who believe in their glitter, but he uses them for their destruction. Again, then, it

is no arbitrary rule that your baptismal vow lays on you. If you renounce the devil as your king, you must renounce his kingdom as your inheritance. It is well to remember that there is such a kingdom—that, side by side with God's kingdom of eternal realities, is another kingdom of falsehood and show, yet with pomps and vanity, power and might, that may well delude and captivate the unwary. A kingdom in absolute and continual opposition to God's—God's kingdom being founded on truth, and Satan's on lies. This false kingdom, then, you are called upon to renounce. But your baptismal vow especially mentions "the pomps and vanity" of the world, as being more particularly the outward sign and token of this kingdom; they result from the "lust of the eye and the pride of life," which, St. John tells us, is not of the Father, but is of the world. God's will is to lift you out of your bondage to the things of sense, out of your slavery to the things seen and temporal, "raising you to the things unseen and eternal." Satan's will is to bind you to them, to make you "serve the creature rather than the Creator."

But we must consider these words more minutely. We know what "pomps and vanity" mean on a grand scale. We can quite believe that the enormous extravagance and luxury of the later Roman emperors,—that the unbounded magnificence of the Court of Louis XIV., were the trappings of a world in which the lust of the eye and the pride of life reigned supreme; but, in your quiet lives, what are you likely to know of such things? What we said of the beginnings of the works of the devil is true here; you may have the bud, which only requires favourable circumstances to change into the full-blown flower. If you once

indulge the "lust of the eye and the pride of life," the common circumstances around you can become to you poms and vanity. Let us put this to the test. You saw that Satan's world was based on falsehood, that its poms and vanity made us slaves to the things of sense. How can you show this slavery more than by valuing people for what they *have* rather than for what they *are*, according to their circumstances instead of according to their character? Now, a poor child may do this as well as a rich lady. If, for instance, at a school a more poorly clad, but quiet and attentive child awakens in her companion only a feeling of contempt and a selfish satisfaction at her own better clothes, she is a slave to the poms and vanity of the world, as much as a fine lady who puts aside a former kind, but homely friend, as no longer of sufficient importance for her to notice. Or, again, how can you show this slavery more than by trying, by every means in your power, to make a fine show, whether by your dress, by your boasting words, or by the vain display of what you know? You can all do this, whatever be your rank. The earnings that would have helped a hard-worked mother, spent on some useless bit of finery, prove it as much as the falsehood, deception, and fraudulent practices resorted to for the purpose of increasing the means of an outward style and show in the higher ranks of life, and are the witness that, fitted to each, is the wily adversary's temptation. Again, when, by your boastful words, you seek for admiration, or by the vain display of knowledge, you seek for flattery, you are as much loving the "poms and vanity" of the world, as if, with Hezekiah, you were displaying your treasures to princes. If you fall in with a certain religious way of speaking, and talk about your religious

feelings, because it is expected of you, or because it induces religious people to notice you or to help you, you are worshipping "the pomps and vanity of the world," as truly as the apostate who denies his faith for the sake of temporal gain.

This vow of renunciation of the world, then, is not confined to any station, or age, or condition: it meets us all; alike in our religion as in our amusements, and it bids us have nothing to do with the laws and customs of any kingdom but God's. It bids us renounce the world's false estimate of right and wrong, by which not the sin, but the discovery of the sin, is thought the shame; by which successful wrong-doing meets with greater favour than unsuccessful right-doing; it bids us renounce the world's selfish maxims, its hollow professions, its meretricious pleasures, and its unreal religion,—for these are truly its "pomps and vanity." But, indeed, the vow goes deeper; it bids us renounce the world itself. That is, it bids us renounce all that gathers itself together into a world, with rules and maxims, principles and ways, of its own; for such a world must be separate from God, and must therefore be based on falsehood, by whatever name it calls itself, whether fashionable or religious. We are called to renounce whatever would teach us to put *its* valuation and not God's valuation upon the things that are seen and temporal, upon wealth, and rank, and success, and outward splendour and amusement; whatever would put *its* judgment and decision, *its* opinion and teaching, *its* praise and blame, as the tribunal before which we are to bend, instead of bidding us know no rule but His, who is our rightful King, and to whom alone we shall have to give account when He comes to judge the world in righteousness.

Our baptismal vow of renunciation concludes with "all the sinful lusts of the flesh." Lust simply means desire, longing for. Now, all the desires of the flesh are not sinful, but each and all become so when they are excessive, or when they are abused; and it is so much the tendency of all fleshly desires to be either the one or the other, that we hardly use the word "lust" without its implying to us not moderate desire, but immoderate longing; and so St. John uses it when he says, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." These lusts spring from that fleshly nature which we have in common with the beasts that perish; and the moment we let its desires rule and master us, we are in that proportion living the life of mere animals instead of the life of the sons of God.

St. Paul tells us that, "if we live after the flesh, we shall die;" that "being carnally minded (or the minding of the flesh) is death." God's life within us is dead, and therefore we sink into the state of the brutes that perish. He tells us that our life is to be a constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit, that we have been given the Spirit that we may be victorious in this fierce struggle, and live not as mere animals, according to the desires and lusts of the flesh, but as children of God according to the will of the Spirit. This struggle between the flesh and the Spirit begins in childhood; it is the lust of the flesh that tempts a child to be the slave of its own greediness, leading it to break all the rules of its parents about eating and drinking; leading it to petty stealing, story-telling, and meannesses, to gratify this ruling passion of the flesh. Unrestrained greediness in a child prepares him only too surely for indulging

in other and grosser forms of evil as he grows up, because it makes him the slave of his fleshly lusts ; and these will grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength. Greediness becomes gluttony ; but, more than this, the indulgence of it uncontrolled and pampered in the child, has prepared the way for intemperance generally in the grown-up man ; for intemperance is the inordinate gratification of the lusts of the flesh. It is intemperance that enervates the mind by luxurious, and slothful, and selfish living ; it is intemperance that besots the senses in drunkenness ; and it is intemperance that destroys both soul and body by impurity and vice.

This vow, then, touches us more individually than either of the others, for it is directed against temptations that are within ourselves, and that depend not on outward circumstances. The pomps and vanity of the world may seem more directly to assail the rich and great, but the lusts of the flesh each one carries within himself. We may shut the door upon the world without, but we cannot shut the door upon the world within. The temptation, indeed, varies according to our age and circumstances, coming in very different forms at different times, but having ever the same source. For whether it comes in the form of greediness to the child, or of over-indulgence and love of ease to the slothful, or of luxurious living to the rich and refined, or whether it comes in its grosser forms of drunkenness and vice to the poor, the prodigal, and the profligate, it still springs from the same source ; it is the lusts of the flesh becoming our masters and making us their slaves. For instance, the love of ease—the “little more sleep and the little more slumber”—that cheats us of our morning’s devotion ; the slothful indolence that holds us

back from helping others ; the self-indulgence that leads us captive at its will, so that, at last, we care not what happens as long as we are at ease—these things are known to us all. How many a child among the poor has been allowed to go her own way to utter ruin and misery, because her parents would not be troubled to take a real, self-denying, watchful care of their family ? How many a young girl, in the higher ranks of life, has hardened her heart by the softness and indulgence of her life, till all love and care for anything but her own gratification has died out ? Again, how does luxurious living—the faring sumptuously every day, till enjoying a good dinner becomes the main object of life—meet its counterpart in the coarser drunkenness and riotous living of a man who, to gratify these fleshly lusts, deprives his family of the necessities of life ? While the temptation to impurity comes to many in heart and thought, who are saved from all impurity of word and life ; but we must not forget our Master has told us that, in His eyes, the giving way to the lusts of the flesh is the same whether it be in thought or in deed.

In each of these cases “we are sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh we shall reap corruption.” “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Surely, then, as the baptized children and freemen of God, and heirs of His kingdom, you are bound to renounce the taskmaster whose wages is death ; bound to renounce works of which St. Paul expressly says that “they that do such things cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” If you would really and honestly strive to resist these temptations of the flesh, you must deny yourselves in those things that would foster and encourage them ;

you must forego the indulgence that enervates us ; you must give up the amusements, and pleasures, and society which you feel are making you subject to your sinful lusts. All the details of such self-government must be left to your own conscience. What may do you harm may not do another harm, and to his own Master alone is he answerable ; but you must remember your Lord's solemn warning, " If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell." Are you, then, ready, even as you would choose life rather than death, to accept this vow on your Confirmation morning, and to say of the sinful lusts of the flesh, " I renounce them all " ?

IV.

We have but faith ; we cannot know ;
 For knowledge is of things we see ;
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,
 A beam in darkness ; let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell ;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before.

In Memoriam.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH REQUIRED BY THE CHURCH
 AT CONFIRMATION—THE END IT IS TO ANSWER—
 THOUGHTS ON THE CREED—FAITH IN THE FATHER,
 SON, AND SPIRIT.

WE saw that the Baptismal Vow had three parts :—
 i. Renunciation ; ii. Faith ; iii. Obedience. The
 vow of " Renunciation " we considered in the last

chapter, but it would be a great mistake to think that that was the chief point of our baptismal engagement. We must never forget that we renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, in order that we may be able more thoroughly to enter upon the inheritance of which we have been made the heirs, and that we may go forth into life strong to do, and to enjoy, as God's freemen, and not as Satan's slaves. We have renounced all false masters,—the other lords that would have dominion over us,—not that we may be left to ourselves, alone and helpless, but that we may receive the Lord of life, and light, and love as our true Master. The vow of renunciation is, as it were, to clear the ground on which that goodly house, not made with hands, shall be raised, the ground-story of which is built on earth, but the top-stone of which is laid in heaven. Let us, then, go on to the second clause, "Faith," which is the foundation of the building.

"Secondly, to believe all the articles of the Christian faith." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."¹ The Church, therefore, at once takes us to the simple exposition of our faith found in the Apostles' Creed.

THE CREED.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Almighty ; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost ; The Holy Catholick Church ; The Communion of Saints ; The Forgiveness of sins ; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen."

This Creed takes you back to the apostolic times, when Jesus and the Resurrection, the new life to which in Him, and with Him, you are raised, and the name of the one true God, formed the theme of apostolic teaching. In it the Church bases your faith on facts, and not on theories ; on persons, not on doctrines ; on what God has actually done for you, not on what you feel towards God. You are given, in these few words, on first entering life, truths which can never fail you ; truths on which you may live and grow for ever. No well-arranged system of doctrine, no set of opinions, does the Church offer you ; she does not seek to make you a supporter of her faith, but she does seek to give you a faith that shall be simple enough and yet deep enough to support you in all the varying circumstances of life ; simple enough for a child, yet deep enough to meet the wants of a man ;—a faith that shall keep you through the snares and temptations of early life ; through the doubts and difficulties, the work and labour of middle life ; through the loneliness and weariness of old age, to the life everlasting. For this great end she bids you believe in God the Father Almighty, as in One who can never fail you ; in God the Son, the Virgin-born, the Man Christ Jesus, as in One who can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities ; and in God the Holy Ghost as in One who will be to you the Comforter. For this great end, she bids you believe in the Holy Catholic Church, as in that which shall assure you of the final victory of good over evil, amidst all your

doubts and difficulties ; in the Communion of Saints, as in the love and fellowship which the loneliness of a sad and solitary life cannot touch ; and in the Forgiveness of Sins, as in that which must lie at the foundation of all true peace. For this she speaks to you of a sure and certain hope in the words, " I believe in the Resurrection of the body," and of a blessedness which the world cannot give and cannot take away, in the words, " I believe in the life everlasting."

This is the faith the Church teaches you to lisp in early childhood, hoping and believing that it will come back to you in after-life, when most you need it. The manger where the infant Jesus was laid, the star that shone in the east, the shepherds keeping their watch by night, the cross upon the hill-side, the cruel soldiery and the crown of thorns, this is all that the words convey to the child, but she trusts that they will come back to the wanderer with the name of a Father to whom he may return, that they will come back to the sinner and the outcast with the name of a Saviour who loved them unto the death, to the sad and sorrowing with the name of a Comforter who will support and strengthen them. Little by little, as it is needed in the changes and chances of life, she trusts this Creed will unfold itself before you, in its breadth and depth, in its greatness and glory. She gathers up even this short Creed into a still shorter summary for you in the next answer.

First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world.

Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind.

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.

The love of the Father, the work of the Son, the office of the Holy Ghost; faith in these three things may well begin and end our Creed, for eternity itself shall not exhaust their meaning and fulness. And can each child thus appropriate these great truths, and say, "I believe in God who created me, in Christ who redeemed me, and in the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth me"? Yes, for the breath that he draws, he draws from God; yes, for Christ took his nature that He might redeem him from Satan; yes, for every right thought that he has ever had, and every right act that he has ever done, is a witness of the presence of the Holy Spirit within him.

It would be beyond the scope of this book to bring before you any regular system of doctrine drawn from the Creed; but as this Creed is the confession of faith required of you at confirmation, I should be glad to suggest some thoughts upon it that may make it a more living form of belief to you.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." "He that cometh to God must believe that He is."¹ He that believes in Him must know Him; and "though we cannot by searching find out God," He has revealed Himself to us both in His word and works. "This is life eternal," was our Lord's solemn declaration; "to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent."

The Creed speaks to us of God by His highest title first, as "the Father" even before it speaks of Him as the Creator, for He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all *men*, while He is only the Creator of the world.

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

Again, there is added to the name of Father the word "Almighty." One there must be in whom all power and might exists,—to whom all the generations of men can look up with the sure and certain faith that He will not fail; that with Him "all things are possible;" One, in fact, who has not only the will, but the power, and not only the power, but the will to order, save, and hold up the whole world, with all its teeming myriads, from the beginning to the end. Such an one we find in Him who is not only a Father but a Father Almighty.

"The Maker of heaven and earth:" by Him all things exist; it is not only that He keeps the world, and orders its goings now; but that from Him it originally came. He made it—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"—even as He now "upholdeth all things by the word of His power." In this great Creed not one word is said as to how or when all things were made; it does not matter how long God's laws have been in force; it does not matter through what changes His order has led the world; our Creed goes simply and plainly to the root of the matter, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." I believe that all laws have come from Him, the Law-giver; I believe that all changes as well as all order have come from Him, the Creator. Had I not this sure foundation on which to stand, I might dread this and that discovery made by science, as shaking the ground beneath me, but I know that the laws are His laws, and that the more thoroughly they are discovered the more surely must they end in Him.

This first clause of your Creed—"I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth," brings

the whole world's history before you:—as “the Father Almighty,” the whole moral government of the world is in His hands;—as “the Maker of heaven and earth,” the whole physical organization of the world is in His hands too,—believing this, you are as years go on to “acquaint yourself with God,” in both these, the great revelations of His law and character, and “be at peace,” believing more and more that “He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” Remembering that He has said—“Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord that exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth,” we may be sure that He rejoices more in those who try to understand His works and character from the beginning, though it may be with many failures and mistakes, than in those who too easily dismiss the whole subject as beyond their comprehension. Would this not be so with an earthly parent? Picture to yourselves an earthly home in which, during the nursery years of the children, the father is away, leaving them, however, many indications of his character and will, and sending them from time to time letters of information upon all they find around them. The burden of all he says, is still that they should strive to know him, and prepare to be with him. Some of the children will not take the trouble to understand his character, or to enter into the meaning of his plans and rules; they will do as they are bid on all other points, and are ready to enjoy any happiness he has prepared for them, but they cannot bring themselves to think much on the subject; or again, others think that their father and his character, and his ways, are altogether beyond their comprehension: ‘What can children have to do with such

things? they do not suppose that they should understand him if they tried, they are content to wait till he comes, and everything will be plain," they say. One thoughtful child acts differently; to him there is a pleasure in tracing the father's character through all the various employments and rules which he has left them, through the order and arrangements around: very often he finds himself mistaken, but a real intimacy exists between him and his father which cannot exist with the others. When the time comes for them all to take their place in the renewed family circle, which of them will be best fitted to enjoy their father's society? to which must he look with most certainty of being understood? from which will he claim most sympathy? which, in fact, will be most entirely one with him? The children who, from various reasons, never tried to understand him or to feel in harmony with him, or the child who, notwithstanding many mistakes, had yet been learning to enter into his mind? Thus with ourselves,—the more we really seek to know God in the world's moral government, and in the world's physical history, the better fitted we shall be for the time when "we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face, and know even as we are known."

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord." "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" is the all-important question still, and will be so more and more. To know Him as the express image of the Father, as the God man and the man God, as the Son of God, as the Saviour and Deliverer of His people, is salvation. The Creed bids us here believe *in* Jesus Christ, as in the first clause it bids us believe *in* the Father;—it is not only that we are to believe what is written about Him, but that we

are to trust *in* Him as one willing and able to save to the uttermost all that come to Him. "Ye believe *in* God, believe also *in* Me," are our Lord's own words. In this way the Creed teaches us justification by faith, not as a doctrine to be received in the head, but as a living trust in a living person, even as St. John taught it,—“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” But what do we mean by a living faith in a living person, by the faith that justifies and saves us? We mean this,—that we are to look from ourselves to Christ, to look to Him each day, as a Redeemer and Deliverer, whose blood shall cleanse us from all unrighteousness, whose strength shall strengthen us in the hour of temptation, whose Spirit shall purify our spirits, whose love shall awaken our love, whose righteousness shall make us righteous!—as a Friend and Elder Brother whose help and sympathy can never fail, who does not look cold because the world looks cold, or change to us because we change to Him;—as “an High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;”—as the Resurrection and the Life, “who has overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life;”—as the only begotten Son who is to be to us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life. It is all this that we mean when we repeat the well-known words of the Creed, “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord.”

We then go on to the simple narrative of the facts of His earthly life and death, on which our

trust in Him as a Saviour, Friend, and Brother is based. "He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." He lived out His perfect life of obedience and submission, of love and charity, before a godless and unbelieving world, which had no love to give in return for His love, and whose only cry was, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The Creed continues, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;" as a common malefactor He was "crucified," dying a death of shame for us, for He gave Himself a ransom for all; as a man He died the same death that you and I must die, for "He tasted death for all men." It was a real death, a death that laid His lifeless body in the tomb, and sent His soul into the world of spirits, for "He descended into hell." These mysterious words are left without note or comment; we say simply that we believe that "Christ descended into hell." This gives us the blessed assurance, that He not only trod the dark valley of the shadow of death, but entered the unknown region beyond, in order that He might pass through all that we are called to pass through,—above all, in order that when we pass through it, we may not pass through it alone.

"The third day He rose again from the dead." That same soul that had departed from the body amid the rending of the rocks and the darkness around, that had descended into hell, now came back, was reunited to the same body, and lived again. The prints of the wounds, the marks of the nails were there, so that even the unbelieving Thomas saw and was convinced. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." It is on this truth that we build our own hope of a resurrection. He died as we shall die, He

rose as we shall rise. "He ascended into heaven." "Behold, I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." "Where I am, there ye may be also." Is this all a dream? Does it not sound very like one to you? This is the Creed that you are about to profess that you "steadfastly believe"; but when you look out on your own opening life, on the worldly hopes of prosperity and success, of selfish enjoyment and daily amusement dawning upon you, does not this life and death of the Blessed One rise up as a vision of the past, so far removed from the actual world in which you are living, that it is only like the words of a pleasant song? But it is true,—it is true that once upon this earth there was a life of perfect love and purity, and self-denial and unselfishness lived out, and lived out as an example to the world, an example made possible for men only in and through the death upon the cross by which it was ended. It is true, that by and through that death, many have since with feeble and faltering steps walked in the same path, and have ascended whither He has gone before. It is true, that the pomps and vanity, the wealth and applause of a successful life, will one day seem the dream, and the love and righteousness of Christ's life the only reality. And more, it is true that the cross at your baptism was the sign and token that you too should follow in His footsteps, for they are the foot-prints of the way of life.

Are you ready on your Confirmation morning to say, "All this I steadfastly believe"? Are you ready in this faith to enter upon your earthly life; to enter upon it bravely and boldly as a redeemed child of God, whose path onwards is clearly marked, whose warfare is well defined?—for all that is false,

and base, and impure, and selfish, must be struggled with and shall be overcome.

Christ's life may seem a dream to you as you sit and ponder upon its history ; but He is ready in your own life to translate it into a reality. Think what it is to put that and nothing else before you as your example,—no man's rules, no man's system, but Christ's life and that alone. There will be nothing human, or loving, or true, in your life to cast out. The carpenter's shop at Nazareth consecrated all work, the wedding feast at Cana all married love and happiness, the kindly intercourse at Bethany all social enjoyment and friendship, the tears at the tomb of Lazarus all human sorrow, the weariness at the well of Siloam all human weakness, the indignant outburst against the Scribes and Pharisees all righteous indignation against formalism, injustice, and shams, and the mourning over Jerusalem all national feeling of joy and sorrow. To love what Christ loved, to hate what Christ hated, to despise what Christ despised,—this indeed is "the victory that overcometh the world."

"He sitteth at the right hand of God ; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." He is watching from His place in heaven the struggles of His people on earth, not as one at a distance, but as one with them, seeing all, sympathizing with all, and "from *thence*," that is, from watching and helping them, "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." What can we ask for more? He who knows all about us, who has known all our temptations, weakness, and difficulties,—He who has watched over the whole long fight from the time of the first martyr Stephen, aye, rather, from the first martyr Abel, down to the last struggle that shall be known on earth,—He

will come to judge the quick and the dead. Yea, for "God hath appointed the day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." The Infant that slept in the manger at Bethlehem is to be the King that shall sit upon the throne of judgment. May we not well look forward with thankfulness and joy, that He who knows the world as no one else can know it,—He who loved it even unto the death,—is called to judge it? What that day shall reveal we know not, but we know that "the Judge of all the earth shall do right."

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." Faith in the indwelling Spirit of God must lie at the foundation of all knowledge of the things of God. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things." This promise abides with the Church, though in the present day we are apt to overlook it. In an active practical age the thought of an indwelling Spirit guiding and directing man seems more like the reverie of a dreamer than one of the great facts of Christianity; our Confirmation Service, however, witnesses year by year to its truth and reality. The Church bids her chief minister lay his hand upon every child as he grows to man's estate, in token that the Heavenly Spirit shall descend upon him and abide in him, and prays that His influence and power over him may ever more and more increase till he comes to the everlasting kingdom. Confirmation is, as we shall see by and by, in considering the service, the great outward symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit among us, and therefore this article of our creed will again come before us.

"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." You

are about publicly to accept your place in this great Catholic Church ; it is well therefore to know what it really is. In speaking of Baptism as taking the place of the rite of circumcision, we see how completely the Christian Church was but an enlargement of the Church called in Abraham ; the same vineyard for a time let out to other husbandmen ; the same olive tree, though with fresh branches grafted in. The Church was called in Abraham ; it existed then as a witness to all the world,—a witness which had its effect doubtless far and wide, but it was not intended then and there to embrace the world within its arms, though this was most distinctly promised for the future. “In thee,” God said, speaking to Abraham, “shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” The dispensation of the law, four hundred years after, gave the Church for a time a more exclusive and simply national character ; still it was a witness to other lands that they might become worshippers of the true God if they would. God gathered the Jews into one visible Church, even as the first-born of the Jews themselves were consecrated to Him, in token that all were His.

The exclusive and national character of the Church in Jewish times was a phase through which it passed, to prepare it by the law for Christ, and thus, through the schoolmaster, for the liberty of the sons of God. A Church then there has always been holy to the Lord from the days of Abraham ; Catholic it became on the day when Christ bid His disciples go into all lands, baptizing all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, gathering in the world beneath the banner of the cross. On the day of Pentecost, the day of the outpouring of the Spirit, the great fact that henceforth the

Church was to be co-extensive with the world was more fully revealed, and the apostles began to understand that there was no longer to be "either Jew or Gentile, either bond or free, either male or female, but that all were to be one in Christ Jesus." It is to the Church under the new dispensation that the words of the Creed, "the Holy Catholic Church," therefore especially refer, that visible kingdom of Christ on earth, of which all who are baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity are members, and which is holy in her worship, holy in her sacraments, holy in her Head. Each member, too, is holy in this sense, that each has been consecrated to God, and has been received by Him; a Christian is therefore contradicting the name he bears, and the profession he has made, if he is not holy; but while he himself may be cut off, the root must ever remain holy to the Lord. For against this Church the gates of hell shall not prevail. Reading its history, we may think that at times darkness and evil were spreading over it, settling down upon it, and overshadowing it altogether; but the God who kept it through the idolatry of the Israelites, through the oppression of the Babylonian captivity, has kept it, and is keeping it now and ever. We may mourn over the sins and shortcomings, over the variances and bitter hatreds that disgrace its members, and still more deeply over our own; we may fear for the fiery trials through which she shall pass; but that the Church covenanted of God to Abraham beneath the starry heavens, more than three thousand years ago, and kept through good and evil ever since, can be lost now, is impossible. The triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness, of God over Satan, is sure and certain. The rainbow in the

heavens is not so sure a sign that never again shall the dark waters of the deluge overwhelm the world, as is the cross upon the hill-side of Calvary a token that Satan shall never bruise His head who hung there, nor evil gain the victory over good. The victory is sure and certain; what is not certain is the part that we as individuals, or even as a Church, shall take in the struggle; whether accepting and believing in the Spirit we shall go on ever fighting and learning more and more, or whether we shall rest, weary of the strife, and shall bury our talent in the ground, till at last we have it taken from us, and given to others who will use it better, this alone is doubtful. The victory is sure and certain, but whether it is a victory in which we shall participate rests with ourselves. God grant that this may not be a doubtful point with any of you who receive the Church's benediction, but that her prayer may be answered, and you be found "faithful soldiers and servants of Christ to your lives' end."

"In the Communion of Saints," we have been speaking of the Church militant; we speak here of the union that should exist both between her members on earth, and with her members in the Church triumphant in heaven.

We believe in the "Communion of Saints," because we believe that God's whole family are one in Christ Jesus. We know what it is in an earthly family for its members to be united with one another in and through the common love they all bear to an especially beloved member; how it unites their interests, allays their jealousies, awakens kindly sympathies and smooths difficulties. This is some kind of example to us of the union the whole Church on earth may have in Christ Jesus. He is everywhere the connecting link, for He who

is looking down upon us, is looking down on each member of His Church throughout the world ; He who is caring for us is caring for them, and in Him we are one. If in the Church's wrongs He is wronged, and in the joy of all her members He rejoices, surely in proportion as we have a real, personal love for Him, we must enter through Him into "the Communion of Saints" on earth. When it was said of Christians, "See how they love one another," we may be sure that the love the whole Church bore to Christ her Head was deep, personal, human, and fervent ; now that it might be too often said, "See how these Christians hate one another," must we not fear that the love which the Church bears to Christ has grown cold, unreal, and forced ? Our faith in "the Communion of Saints" will be true or false as our faith in "Jesus Christ our Lord" is true or false. If we have little love for the Church's Head, we shall have little love for her members. If our faith is confined to believing with the mind that certain doctrines are true, our love will be confined to those who think as we think, and believe as we believe ; but if our faith and trust are in Christ Jesus, our love in and through Him will be given to all who bear His name, quieting our jealousies and variances, smoothing our difficulties, and uniting our interests, we shall *then* believe in "the Communion of Saints." But it is of more than this that the Creed speaks. He who is looking down on the Church militant is the same as He who is present with the Church triumphant, thus in Him we are also united to her. You will understand this better if we again refer to an earthly family. Imagine a case in which, after very long absence in a far distant land, the wanderer returns

to the home of his childhood ; even the absent members feel that he is in a measure restored to them, because he is again with their father. "Now that you are really at home I hardly feel that we are separated," is the expression often used in such a case. Or again, after watching over a younger member of the family with anxious care, and at last giving him up into the charge of one in whom you feel entire trust and confidence, how often the words come spontaneously to your lips, "I feel better satisfied to think of him with you than even to have him with me." You feel that there is a sense of union, not of separation, in both these cases, just in proportion as the one with whom the absent member is, is loved and trusted by you, while in the last case the feeling of separation comes with tenfold power if he is with one in whom you have no confidence. This is an illustration, though a very incomplete one, of the union that in Christ we may have with those gone before. We had been caring for them, loving and watching over them, but we have given them up now to One whom we can trust, better far than we can trust ourselves. As we think of His love and rest in it, we feel that we can leave them with Him, and in Him have communion with them still.

Hints there are in God's word of a more direct link between the living and the dead ; hints which vary in the fulness of their revelation, sometimes in proportion to the holiness and character of the individual, and sometimes in proportion to their need. In early life those who have lost any one whom they dearly love, cling to the thought of some union with them still ; in middle life, incessant occupation amidst the world that is seen, often shuts out the longing for communion with the world that is not

seen, though it comes at times even then, with strong and passionate power, and more abidingly as the narrowing family circle on earth speaks of a widening one in heaven. But too often all this is more a dream and a sentiment than any true faith in "the Communion of Saints." It has no influence on the life, no power to raise the thoughts and hopes above the daily scenes and gossip around, or to strengthen us "to lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset us." "Seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," "let us run the race with patience," said an apostle,—this then is the test of a true faith in "the Communion of Saints." This is the prayer of the Church militant, for as she blesses God for those departed this life in His faith and fear, she also beseeches Him "to give us grace so to follow their good example, that with them we may be made partakers of His heavenly kingdom." This faith in "the Communion of Saints" is generally deepened and increased in proportion as we are called to meet trial and suffering, or to great and self-denying works for Christ's sake. The vail between the two worlds is as a vail of stone to those whose daily life is hard and worldly, but it becomes more and more transparent to those whose life is purified and holy, till at last it is often gradually lifted up, and faith seems almost to pass into sight even here on earth.

Yet even to those who deny their holy calling, and to whom the heavens above are nothing beyond the starry firmament, and bring no thought of God or the life to come, even to them this article of our faith has its blessing. How often has grief for the little one, early claimed by its heavenly Father, and carried by angels into Abraham's bosom,—how

often has the yearning once again to meet the loved one who has been called to join the assembly of the saints made perfect, awoke a new life within the sinner's soul, and raised him from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and thus, through the truth of which this article of his creed bears witness, has come even to him a message of salvation.

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins." We must all feel that but for the truth of this clause in our Creed, the Church militant could never become the Church triumphant. If the communion of saints is the link between the two, the forgiveness of sins is the only pathway. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Throughout the whole Creed we have never spoken of *ourselves*;—we have spoken of "the Church," of which we are members indeed, but which would continue to be the Church whether we belonged to her or not; we have spoken of the "Communion of Saints" in which we ought to be united, but which will be a true union whether we are partakers of it or not; and here we speak of "the forgiveness of sins" as one of the great facts of Christianity, which is true and real whether we participate in its blessings or not. These gifts are the Church's heritage, hers for ever, whether we accept or reject them. This is what I meant by the Church founding her Creed on facts, and not on doctrines; on what God has done for us, and not on what we feel towards God. The Creed does not tell us to believe that we are sinners, or even to believe in sin; she is not careful to put the malady before us, but she puts the remedy; she does not

bring before us our part, but God's part in this matter. Each man must feel his need of forgiveness for himself, but this she leaves to the Spirit to teach him; having taught us to believe in that Spirit, she has taught us to believe in one whose office it is "to convince the world of sin;" the personal work, therefore, she leaves to Him, for it can only be when the heart has learnt from Him its own bitterness, when the confession, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," bursts from the lips, that we shall fully enter into the words "forgiveness of sins." For this she waits; she puts before us the remedy, believing that the Spirit will help us to turn to it in the hour of utmost need.

"In the resurrection of the body." This clause, like the mysterious clause of our Lord's descending into hell, leaves a very difficult subject without note or comment. It tells us that our spirits shall be clothed again in an outward and visible form, but the question "with what body do they come?" it leaves, as St. Paul left it, unanswered. He tells us that "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body;" so we believe that He giveth to every spirit a body as it hath pleased Him, and that it shall be its own body. This further we know, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven," and therefore we are sure that what was corruptible shall become incorruptible, and what was mortal shall become immortal, but how, and when, and where, we know not. We must be content at present to walk by faith, and not by sight, only certain of this, that when "our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

“I believe in the life everlasting.” This is the crowning clause of the Creed; it is this that gives completeness to all that has gone before; it is this that gives a meaning to our own lives; it is this that raises us above all other created creatures; it is this that can alone satisfy the yearnings of the spirit within us. “I believe in the life everlasting.” The Church has traced our life up to the everlasting Father, she has bidden us believe in Him not only as a Creator, but as a Father, and therefore now, as His children, she bids us believe in the life everlasting. St. Paul, indeed, tells us, “that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, waiting for the redemption of the body,” but to what these words refer with regard to the world of creatures, we know not. Men only are spoken of in God’s word as being His children, therefore we are led to imagine that in them only is the germ of an immortal life breathed by the Father of their spirits. It is through faith in the eternal Father as our Father on which alone we can ground our hope of immortality. God breathed His Spirit into man, and how can he who has the Spirit of God cease to be? He made man in His own image and likeness: how can anything so made die out? It is, then, as we believe, the first article of our Creed that we shall believe the last; if, as men, we are not only creatures made by the Maker of all the world, but children born of the Father Almighty, created in His image, and breathed into life by His breath, we may say, in the full trust of children, “I believe in the life everlasting.” Again, the Church has bidden us believe in God the Son, and in His life and death on earth for us, for in Him standeth our eternal life; she has told us that the grave and gate of death had

no power to keep Him prisoner, for He, even as a mortal man, rose to immortality, therefore we, the creatures of yesterday, may be assured of the same. For "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised;" He would thus stand on the same ground on which we stand; He would thus take His place in common with all the dead, that we might feel our hope of immortality secure, while thinking of one fashioned like as we are, of one who rose from the dead only because all shall rise, and who now sitteth at the right hand of God. This is St. Paul's argument in the opening passage of 1 Cor. xv. 13—16, in which Christ's resurrection is founded on the fact that all the dead shall rise, for "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen."

It is the hope of immortality that alone makes life comprehensible to us; without it, the whole would be a dreary quicksand, with no firm footing anywhere; but in this hope we have a sure standing point given us, which lifts us above the troubles and trials, the doubts and misery, of this transitory life, and enables us to look down into and to understand them. As you go on in life, there will be much to bewilder you, much to tempt you to ask, "Of what use is my life? is there, after all, anything worth living for?" To some of you, it may be, life will seem so monotonous and resultless, to others so hard and laborious, to others, perhaps, so sad and disappointing, that you will be tempted to faint by the way; but if you can say, "I believe in the life everlasting," you can even here "rise above the things seen and temporal, to the things unseen and eternal." After all, this earthly life is but a very small fragment of the whole, it is but the beginning, the nursery life of each individual, and therefore we may be well content to learn its

lessons patiently and well ; they may seem useless now, but we shall find a use for them by and by, and see, as well as believe, that they were all absolutely needful. I am sure that the conviction that what God is teaching you through all the varying circumstances of your life is not for to-day or to-morrow, but for ever, will help you greatly towards bearing them patiently. It is resultless suffering, apparently useless discipline, troubles that seem a freak of fate, that are really hard to bear,—and sometimes our earthly lot seems to be so to us. Instances of a life's activity destroyed by the carelessness of an attendant in early life, of a life's happiness marred by some trivial mistake, of a life's fortune lost by a few hours' delay, and thousands of similar examples with which life abounds, these are things which most try a man's faith ; the trial seems to have come so accidentally, might have been so easily prevented, that he cannot conceive why it came at all. He may learn quietly to submit, and say, "it is God's will," but he will hardly believe that it is indeed sent or allowed by a perfectly loving Father, and will certainly miss the comfort he might have, if he does not also learn that the end and intention of God's will in his tried life does not stop here, but that it is to train and prepare him for his work and place in the life to come, when all that he has been learning through tedious years of waiting, suffering, inactivity, or sorrow shall be called into full employment. You might well be overwhelmed with the mystery of your present life, filled as it is with longings that can never be fulfilled, with yearnings that can never be satisfied, with joys that but awaken a craving for deeper, fuller, truer enjoyment, with pain and sorrow that seem meant to

purify you for a life beyond, which yet there is not, if you cannot say, "I believe in the life everlasting." But you need not be thus "of all men most miserable," for "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." These very yearnings themselves bear witness that your life comes from God, and He will not mock you with the gift of powers and cravings which He never intends to satisfy. "Wherefore," it is said, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." He is not ashamed to be called our God, because "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man imagine, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, and hath revealed to us by His Spirit." "In My Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you," were our Lord's own words, and we may rest assured that what Christ has prepared for His people shall satisfy all their longings and fulfil all their expectations.

This is the profession of faith that you are about to make; it trammels you with no narrow code of religious belief, but it goes to the very foundation of the matter. It asserts the truth of God's revelation to man, and by the word Creed, or belief, it bids you rest upon that revelation not as a matter of opinion but as a matter of faith. You cannot prove this Creed as you would prove a mathematical problem; you accept it in faith that He who made you has revealed Himself to you. Can you look upon this world and refuse to believe that it bears traces of the hand of a wise and great Creator,—that the very laws that govern it point to a Law-giver? Is that Creator, is that Law-giver likely to have made such a glorious world and all its intelligent inhabitants, and then to have left them in

absolute darkness and in complete ignorance of Himself? Have not all the revelations which men have felt that He has made of Himself to their hearts and consciences in all ages, been indications of that fuller revelation made in His word? And if God has thus revealed Himself, must you not accept this His revelation as the only true account of His name and character, of His will and intentions with regard to men? "To whom will you go," if you cannot say with the disciples of the Son of Man, "Thou hast the words of eternal life"?

In that short summary into which we see the Church gathers up this Creed, she is content to leave you with the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit on your lips. She believes that in that name you have all you need, and that the Spirit Himself shall guide you into all truth. God grant that it may be with an honest and true heart, and with a simple faith, that you make your Christian profession in the words, "All this I steadfastly believe."

V.

“For what contend the wise? For nothing less
 Than that pure faith dissolves the bonds of sense;
 The soul restored to God by evidence
 Of things not seen—drawn forth from their recess,
 Rests there, and not in forms, her holiness.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—NEED OF THE LAW STILL—
 THE ONE TRUE GOD SET FORTH IN THE FIRST COM-
 MANDMENT—HIS WORSHIP—HIS NAME—HIS DAY—
 THE SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW AND SOCIAL CODE—
 GOD’S DELEGATED AUTHORITY—SOCIAL MORALITY—
 BEARING FALSE WITNESS—THE LAW OF LABOUR—
 THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE VOW.

“THIRDLY, that I should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.” This is the last clause in the baptismal vow. As “God’s child” you renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil; as “a member of Christ” you accepted the Christian faith; as an “heir of the kingdom” you are called on to keep God’s holy will and commandments, which are the laws of that kingdom.

Very simple was the creed given you to believe, equally simple is the code of laws given you to practise; but as we found with the Creed that its meaning grew with your growth and strengthened with your strength, widening and deepening as you understood it better, so we shall find with the Commandments; for these few simple laws lie at the foundation of all law, and will meet you at every turn in life, teaching you what it is “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Does it seem strange to you that you, as a Christian, should be taught God’s law from

the letter of the old Jewish dispensation? It is, indeed, true that eighteen hundred years have passed away since the exposition of the law from the lips of our Master on the mount; but what have they done for us? Have we so learnt to enter into the spirit of Christianity that we may discard the strictness of the letter of these Jewish laws? I fear not; I fear we must make the humbling confession that Christian England needs it as much as Jewish Canaan.

The commandments we have to consider, then, are "the same which God spake in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Here is set forth to the Jews a truth which we as Christians are even now slow to learn—that it was a God who had already redeemed them who claimed their obedience; that it was a God who had already delivered them from slavery and bondage whom they were called to serve. "I am the Lord thy God, who hath redeemed thee from the bondage of Satan and the tyranny of sin and death," is the great declaration of the Gospel. "Ye are bought with a price, *therefore* glorify God in your bodies and spirits which are His," is the only true foundation of Christian practice.

I. "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me!" What a magnificent opening this is to the law! The trumpet gave no uncertain sound from the heights of Sinai. This law is the word of a Father claiming the obedience of His children, of a King claiming the allegiance of His subjects, of a God claiming the worship of His creatures. It is not too much to say that upon this first commandment everything in time and eternity depends. Are we to own God or Satan as the Lord God omni-

potent? Has there been from all eternity, and shall there be to all eternity, One who could say "I am," One in whom we may rest as "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? Is He the Lord God, hating iniquity and evil, the Lord God righteous and loving, and is there none other god but He? The heathen world was divided; it was ready to propitiate the powers of evil, as well as to offer homage to the powers of goodness, because only here and there had it retained any knowledge of the one great Father of all men. From Sinai sounded forth to the world the great and glorious truth which should free men from all slavish superstition and bondage, whether to the material world around or to the powers of evil beneath. "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." Thou shalt fear no power of evil, thou shalt tremble before no visible form of might, thou shalt worship no dark image of cruelty, thou shalt propitiate no gods of like passions with thyself, for "I am the Lord thy God," even "the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," and "thou shalt have none other gods but Me." There are other gods claiming your allegiance who are set up by the Destroyer, and you will be tempted to worship them; if you do, you will become slaves, full of abject fears and terrors, no longer walking erect in My world, but the victims of your own lusts, receiving the wages of your servitude, which is death. We know by the subsequent history of the Jews that, despite the high state into which they had been called, despite the light that shone upon them, they preferred the darkness and went after other gods, the gods of the heathen nations, having no heart for their own high privileges. The Highest had revealed Himself

to them, but they did not care to know Him. "What might they not have made of this fair world," if they would have known Him, and borne a faithful and unwavering witness to Him in their life amongst the heathen nations around? But this they refused to do; they refused to know Him, they refused to believe in Him as He really is, a God of perfect love, and mercy, and righteousness, and truth, and were therefore continually turning from the false image of God that they had conceived, to the gods of the heathen. Again and again, time after time, did the prophets proclaim Him to them afresh, striving through almost every page of their writings to set forth His greatness and graciousness, His glory, goodness, truth, and love, which false priests had obscured, or which the cruelty and oppression of their kings had made them doubt, or which their own sensual nature, their sins and backslidings, had hidden from them.

As it was with Jews so it is with us, some false and heathenish thoughts of God, some lingering dread that He is such an one as ourselves, will be found to be still keeping us back from loving Him. We do not fully know Him, and so we dare not trust ourselves to Him utterly, unreservedly, and with no shadow of doubt. Who does¹ St. John say are those who continue in sin? Even those "who have not seen Him, neither known Him." And when does St. John say that we shall be really like Him, and love Him as He would be loved? Even "when we see Him as He is." "We needs must love the Highest when we know Him;" therefore is it Satan's one great aim that we may not know Him. Satan ruined our first parents in Eden by suggesting to them hard thoughts of God,

¹ See 1 St. John, iii. 2, 6.

and ever since, generation after generation, has he tried to ruin men by giving them false, dark, and fearful thoughts of Him "who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all."

When this commandment was first set forth, it was God's great protest against the idolatry and cruel superstition of the heathen world, in and through which Satan seduced men to the worship of himself. We must ever remember that the gods of the heathen were no gods, that he who really contests the world with God has ever been one and the same throughout all generations, and will be till the end comes,—even the spirit of evil, the old serpent, the Devil. Therefore we need this commandment still. The outward form of the idol worship may have changed, but the spirit that pervaded it is among us now, giving life to other forms. Is it not so? Are there no gods of this world against which this commandment bears witness? Are there no outward signs of might and power, of wealth and luxury, before which men cast themselves; no opinions and maxims that they are ready to worship? Is there no golden calf to which men bow down as the idol they have set up? The solemn words, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me," may sound as a dead letter, an almost needless formula in a Christian Church, to a Christian congregation, on a Christian Sunday; but how would they sound throughout the week in the market and in the counting-house, and in the busy thoroughfares of men? There may be but one God on a Sunday, but there are gods many and lords many throughout the week. Can we conceive that Satan is not wise enough to fill the place of the idolatry of the heathen with some forms of idolatry better suited to our own day and

times? What does he care whether the image is the golden image of a false god, or only the gold itself, before which men bow down? What does he care whether it is the fear of some imaginary deity, or the sentence of the Sanhedrim, or the dread of mocking words and scornful looks, before which men tremble, so long as it keeps them from saying, "I will worship the Lord God, and Him only will I serve"? What does he care whether men clothe their avenging God with some outward form, or only conceive Him in their own dark imaginations, so long as he hinders them from going to Him and casting themselves in humble trust and confidence at His feet? Once the Tempter spoke out; once, in the fiercest struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil, that the world has ever seen, the secret purpose of all his temptations was revealed; on that exceeding high mountain from which he showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," he said, "All these will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." There, too, once and for ever, the battle was gained, the victory was won; the second Adam stood and redeemed the world, where the first Adam fell and ruined it, for "then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee behind Me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." From that moment we may thank God that the end of the strife became certain; it may be delayed, it still calls forth the groanings that cannot be uttered even from the Spirit Himself; it still demands all the grace of the Son of God, all the love of the Father, to bear us through it, but at last "all things shall be subdued unto Him," and "all nations shall come and worship before Him."

This first commandment proclaims the truth that is to usher in the whole law. If God is our God, then His laws must be our laws, and His ways our ways. If the Lord God, true and just, merciful and righteous, is to govern us, then truth and justice, love and mercy must rule our lives. God sets forth His authority first, and declares Himself to be the one true God who has a right to our worship and obedience, and then sets forth the way in which we are to serve Him.

II. "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image," &c. The first commandment forbade us under any form to worship false gods; this forbids any kind of false worship of the true God. The one is against idolatry; the other against superstition. It forbids alike the outward superstition of image worship, and the inward superstition of resting on a formula of belief. Superstition lies deeper in the hearts of most of us than we are at all aware. Nothing but a true insight into the full meaning of our Creed will ever eradicate it. When we have learnt to know the Father in the Son and through the Holy Ghost, then only shall we be delivered from the bondage of superstition. The craving of the world for some outward and visible form in which it might behold God, and which led to the multiplying of idols among the heathen, was responded to and elevated by the manifestations God made of Himself from time to time under the old dispensation. It was once and for ever satisfied in the incarnation of the Son of God. When Christ came in the flesh, He came not only to fulfil all righteousness, not only to reconcile the world to His Father, but also to fulfil all the yearnings after God that the world had ever known; He was

“the desire of many nations.” “Lord, show us the Father,” said Philip, speaking out the cravings of many generations, “and it sufficeth us.” “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” was our Lord’s reply. Men knew it not at the time, but then and there, in the midst of their common daily life, was one who fulfilled all the world’s craving for a God made visible; who satisfied all its dreams and legends of the gods coming down and manifesting themselves to men. And the world, as it learnt to receive Christianity, accepted this truth, and idolatry such as the Jews had so often fallen into under the old dispensation became impossible under the new, and subtler and more spiritual forms took its place.

The commandment gives us as a reason for obedience, that “God is a jealous God, and will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.” What wonderful and awful words are these, and how constantly has the world’s history proved their truth! God is a jealous God; He is jealous of men thinking of Him as darkness rather than light, of men falsifying His pure and holy worship, of men bowing down to images of Him made by hands, or by the vain imaginations of their own brain. He declares that if they will make the fatal choice, if they will have death rather than life, if they will turn from Him to false representations of their own—then, even to their children’s children, must they suffer the penalty. Have not these words been fulfilled? Of the old times we read how superstition and idolatry degraded the nations, sinking them lower and lower into the depths of sin and misery, generation after generation, till, from the very depths of their misery, they were ready to hail a Deliverer and a Saviour.

They had not liked to retain God in their knowledge ; “ they had worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, therefore God gave them over to a reprobate mind.” Must we not also confess that the blessings of freedom and righteous government, and a pure worship, have been given to thousands who have done nothing to obtain them themselves, but whose forefathers had faith, and steadfastness, and courage, when they knew God to glorify Him as God, and thankfully to accept His light when it dawned upon them, though it beckoned them upwards to Him through a pathway of fire. “ We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out,” was the hope of Latimer, as the flames ascended round him, and he witnessed a good confession against the false worship once more set up in the land. God’s word was pledged that it should be fulfilled, for amid the thunders of Sinai He said, “ I will show mercy unto thousands in them that love Me, and keep My commandments.” Why have Italy and England such a different history for the last three hundred years? Surely the threatening and promise of this law may in some measure give us the answer. Italy, in *rejecting* the truer and purer worship that dawned upon her as upon other nations, preferred darkness to light for herself and for her children ; in *accepting* it, England accepted that which brought with it a blessing to her people throughout her generations. Thus, through its own failures, God is educating the world to acknowledge Him ; and by the misery it suffers in following its own way and refusing His way, He is preparing it to welcome the time “ when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.”

III. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," &c.

The first commandment is against idolatry, the second is against superstition, and the third is against irreverence. If we are forbidden to worship the true God under false forms in the last commandment, we are forbidden to worship Him with a false heart in this. The mockery of an outward show when the heart is far away, may turn the purest form of worship into "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." This commandment must come home to us all. It may be that it requires a greater insight into our motives and acts than we all possess, to see how we are each tempted to break the first two commandments; but about this one we can have, alas! no difficulty. Of a false worship we may think we are guiltless; of a vain worship we must know that we are guilty.

How frequently have the solemn words of prayer and the glorious ascriptions of praise to the Lord God Jehovah been from our lips but vain and meaningless and profane, because our hearts and thoughts were at the farthest ends of the earth! This is, however, but one application of the commandment. It speaks to the profane swearer, and irreverent jester, and the careless talker on sacred things, in words that should come back to him to stop the rising oath, and the light jest, and the thoughtless expression: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

Again: it speaks to those tempted to use God's name for their own party purposes, their own self-interest and end, who are tempted to make a traffic of holy things, and to use their talents in preaching or teaching to their own honour and glory, and bids them remember that "the Lord will

not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain."

There is another breach of this law which we must not pass over—that of taking an oath in the name of the God of truth, and declaring that you will speak the truth, and then speaking falsely. In giving evidence at a trial, or before a magistrate, how often is this commandment broken! Sometimes from good nature, sometimes from the fear the witness has of involving himself in unpleasant circumstances, he will swear one moment to speak "the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," and the next will, with perfect indifference, deny facts that he knows to be true, or assert things that he knows to be false. Most surely the Lord will not hold him guiltless who thus uses His name to prop up a lie. In teaching the Catechism, as some of you may have to do in village schools, this feature of the third commandment should not be overlooked, as, in the number of cases weekly brought before magistrates, it is most lamentable to know the indifference with which often the witnesses commit perjury. I cannot help thinking that this may partly arise from neglecting to teach the Catechism with a view to its practical influence on daily life. The children go forth from the Sunday schools with its words learnt by rote, but with little idea that it is really to teach them the common duties of "that state of life" to which they are called. They do not see the links that connect what they have repeated in their class at school, with the duties they are called on to perform either in the family or social life.

IV. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day," &c.

This is the last commandment of the first table. The commandments of the first table begin with the name of the great God, the Creator of heaven and earth, going on to the pure and spiritual worship which He demands, and to the reverence in which His name is to be held, and ending with the day which He has set apart to be to us a day of rest especially sanctified to Him. "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work." Sunday after Sunday we hear these commandments read as laws for us to obey, and day by day we ask for them as blessings which God alone can give us, in the words, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name ; Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done ;" another witness to us that the requirements of our religion are no arbitrary rules, but ever one with its gifts and blessings. The Sabbath was God's gift to man from the beginning. It is no Jewish institution ; Moses only stamped upon it for a time its Jewish character of austerity and ceremonial, "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear," but which passed from it when our Saviour, who was Lord also of the Sabbath, declared that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for it."

In the fourth commandment, however, its peculiar Jewish strictness does not appear ; but its one enduring feature, which is that of rest, is brought out. As a memorial of God's rest after the works of creation, it was first appointed ; as a type of the Christian's future rest, it is now retained. Other peculiarities regarding it may have altered ; the day itself has been changed ; but this peculiarity must always abide. Whatever else it is, it must in some way speak to a working, weary, labouring

world of rest. It must be a check upon the incessant activity of man; it must make a pause in the ceaseless roar of the world's business, or it loses the character stamped upon it in Paradise. Do we need this day of rest less now, amid the activities of the nineteenth century, than in the repose of Eden when first given to man? or do we less need the command to keep it holy? If left to ourselves, should we make this day the type of all other days? or should we, instead, make our other days of worldliness, selfishness, and money-making a type of it? In the endless turmoil and bustle, in the constant occupation, and business, and pleasures of the present day, are we likely spontaneously to dedicate this day to rest and to God? Surely we know that we are not. God, then, still claims it at our hands. As the first-born of the Israelites were dedicated to the Lord, in token that the whole nation was redeemed by Him—as the bread and wine in the Sacrament are consecrated to the Lord, in token that all that men possess is His—as the ministers are set apart outwardly and visibly by their sacred calling to God's service, in token that all Christians are to be a royal priesthood, a peculiar people—so is the first day of the week claimed by Him as the outward and visible sign that all our days should be His. We are to give Him that day especially, not as a day that is to contradict the other days of our life, but to consecrate them—not as opposed to them, but as the fulfilling of them—as that to which, in work or labour, they are all to lead, even as the work and labour of our whole lives is to prepare us for the rest with God, of which these earthly Sabbaths are a shadow and foretaste.

The change in the day, from the last day of the

week to the first, was very early introduced into the Christian Church. It does not alter the portion of time especially dedicated to God, for it is still a seventh of the week, but it stamps a more joyous character on it, inasmuch as we now celebrate especially the resurrection of our Lord, and our own great hope of immortality, on that day. The Sabbath of the old dispensation looked back to the creation of the present world ; the Christian's Lord's day looks forward to the new creation, to the resurrection-life, to the rest that is yet to come.

“The Sabbaths of eternity,
One Sabbath deep and wide ;
A light upon the shining sea,
The Bridegroom with His Bride.”

Here we close the first table of the law. The Church sums up its lessons for us almost in the same words that our Lord and Master summed it up for us. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.”

The second table is a code of social laws referring to sins against our neighbour and our neighbour's rights, Jewish it may be, but, if we look into it, we shall find it contains a charter of freedom, and liberty, and righteous judgment not yet fully recognized even in the Christian world.

We will examine it, with the exposition given of it in the Catechism. The summary of the second table, like that of the first, the Church founds on our Master's exposition of it. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This one great principle

of love ought of itself to be sufficient for our rule of life, for, as St Paul says, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law;" it is *not* sufficient, simply because we are too selfish to enter into its spirit, and therefore still require the letter of the law in its actual details. We find it very hard to believe that our Lord really laid down this as a universal law: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do to them." We are like the Scribe, ready to ask, "Who is my neighbour?" We are ready to find some Samaritans with whom it is quite right to have no dealings; some who are separated from us by race, interests, or religion, whose claims to brotherhood we need not admit. This feeling descends even to children, whose words and actions constantly show a tendency to deny the rights of those they think inferior in station to themselves, and to withhold kindness and consideration for them. God therefore steps in, and proclaims, in formal laws given without respect of persons, of such and such violations of our neighbour's right, "Thou shalt not do it." He takes the place of our neighbour, and distinctly forbids those acts as acts which are abhorrent in *His* sight—forbids them in His own name, irrespective of all persons, that we may learn that all men are our neighbours, because made in His image, just as our Saviour, in the New Testament, says of acts of kindness and love: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto *Me*."

V. "Honour thy father and mother," &c.

This commandment stands first in the second table of the law, because it is the foundation of all temporal authority; and as the first commandment

spoke of Him whose authority alone we are to own, and bade us confess the Law-giver for our God before it gave us His laws, so the second table opens with the command to honour and obey the authority which God delegates to parents and rulers, to reverence the powers that be, before it goes on to particular social laws. The fifth commandment speaks primarily of that first duty of obedience which a child can know—that of obedience to parents. To children this duty must be taught in its most unquestioning form,—that obedience must be given simply as obedience. By God's direct law in the old dispensation, by Christ's personal example in the new, is it enforced. Almost all that is recorded of our Lord's early life is contained in the words, "He went down with His parents to Nazareth, and was subject unto them;" thus stamping a sacredness upon a child's obedience for all time: and when His earthly life was well-nigh over, and He could no longer be as a son to His mother, His loving care and thought still consecrated the relationship, as from the cross He said to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother!" This, then, is the first and simple application of the command, referring to the obedience and reverence in word and act due from children to parents; but it contains wider lessons, stretching from the family to the nation.

The starting-point is obedience to parents in children, and, springing from this, obedience to teachers and masters in school life, widening out into submission to the Queen and all in authority under her, when the child has passed from the shelter of home and school to the public life of the nation. This is the way the Catechism explains this commandment, in the words "to honour and

succour my father and mother, to honour and obey the Queen, to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, pastors, and masters," and in which she evidently assumes that the authority of parents stands as the representative of all government. When we remember that men must have formed a family and lived a family life before they formed a nation and lived a national life, we can well understand that the authority of a father would naturally be the origin of all government, and would stand as its type and representative. "There is no power but of God," is the reason given by the apostle for submission to the rulers of the land. In this power delegated to man we find the right of the State to take cognizance more or less of the different commandments that follow, and to found the laws of the land upon them.

Looking at the second table of the law thus in the light of a social code, we shall see that it involves reciprocal duties throughout. As regards the fifth commandment itself, St. Paul especially points out, in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, the third and fourth of Colossians, as St. Peter also does in his first epistle, second and third chapters, that the duties on one side involve corresponding duties on the other side. I mean the duties of parents to children, as well as of children to parents; of masters to servants, as well as servants to masters; of rulers to subjects, as well as subjects to rulers.

Honour and reverence can be given only to those who are in some sort worthy of them; the very words suppose conduct that shall call them forth. How strongly must this have been felt by the Jews! They looked up directly to God as their father, and king, and ruler; before their eyes

was always the perfect type of all that parental authority ought to be ; and they must have felt that God thus shadowed forth to them their duties as parents and rulers. He from whom all authority comes is the righteous Judge and the tender loving Father, and when He commits His authority to others, it is to use as He uses it, with righteousness and judgment, "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

Looking at the commandment in this light, the promise attached to it has an enlarged fulfilment. The promise made is, "that your days may be long in the land," or, as St. Paul gives it, "that it may be well with you." In countries in which reverence for authority and law is found, and which rejoice in a righteous government, life will ever be most certain and property most secure. Only read the accounts of the value of life in the East, and you will see how completely the promise is itself a law. The fearful oppression and worthlessness of human life in the eyes of an Eastern ruler,—the sudden retributive atrocities of the people,—are the natural results of an authority that is not righteous, of a forced submission that can never be a reverent obedience. The direct fulfilment of the promise to the Rechabites as a family, was the outward and visible sign of the certainty of its general fulfilment to the end. "As a man soweth so shall he also reap," is true of nations as well as individuals ; God has bound up a nation's well-being in its well-doing. In accepting, therefore, this command as part of your baptismal vow, you accept that which is to make you not only loving and obedient children, but also wise and tender parents, faithful servants and considerate masters, loyal subjects and righteous rulers, as the circumstances

of your life may be. You accept a law which lies at the foundation of national prosperity and true liberty, which is God's eternal protest against anarchy on the one hand and slavery on the other ; thus,

“Turning to scorn, with lips divine,
The falsehood of extremes.”

VI. “Thou shalt do no murder.”

This commandment reaches all cases of violence and ill-doing to your neighbour, whether of word or deed, or as the Church puts it, it bids you “hurt no one by word or deed, and to bear no malice or hatred in your heart.” The first clause in the sentence referring to your social life, the second to your personal life ; of the one the laws of the land may take cognizance, the other is known only to God and your own consciences. The Church has her Lord's authority for thus enlarging it, for in His sermon on the mount He extends this law to all feelings of anger and hatred, and all words of violence and passion. Thus we are taught that, though the favourable circumstances of our life may keep us from the direct breach of the letter of the law, we are yet guilty in God's sight if we break the spirit of it, by cherishing anger, hatred, and revenge. Uncontrolled bursts of vindictive passion may make any man a murderer in act and deed (if circumstances permit), as he is already in thought and will. Long-cherished jealousy and revenge, missing only the opportunity of their gratification, separate a man from God as surely as if his hand had executed the evil purposes of his heart. “Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer ;” and while he remains in that state of heart, whether he gives outward sign of it or not, he abides in the darkness of death. Can it be otherwise? Can

light and darkness, love and hatred, dwell together? Impossible. Instinctively a man feels that hatred and revenge must separate him from God. He knows that he cannot approach Him, that he dares not hold communion with Him, while such feelings are reigning in his heart. Yet there is no magic boundary that can separate you and me from that state. Look at it from a distance, and it seems like a picture of some wild desert that we are never likely to travel, yet for all that we may be in it tomorrow. A sense of wrong and injustice, of double dealing on the part of a supposed friend, of successful rivalry on the part of a supposed inferior, may rouse thoughts and feelings that must be crushed out by God's help then and there, if we would not become the children of the devil rather than the children of God.

VII. "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

This commandment also our Lord Himself comments upon, and teaches us to include in it not only the act of sin, but the thought, and word, and look of sin. It is of this commandment that He utters the solemn words, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell." In other words, "Cut off from thee every occasion and temptation to this sin, though it be dear to thee as thine eye, for, if persisted in, it is not thine eye that shall perish, but thou thyself that shalt be lost, for thou shalt sink into the pit of destruction." Above all, then, renounce such company, refuse to read such books, or to witness such sights, as excite you to this sin. The Catechism takes this commandment as going to the root of all sensual indulg-

ence, for she gathers up its lesson thus: "To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity"—evidently pointing out the fact of which we spoke under the head of "lusts of the flesh," that the want of self-control and self-restraint is the root of all the sins of the flesh, no matter what form they may assume, whether of sloth, gluttony, drunkenness, or impurity.

VIII. "Thou shalt not steal."

This law comprehends all falseness of action, and bids us "be true and just in all our dealings, and keep our hands from picking and stealing." It includes all such unfair dealing with our neighbour as would take his time, his energies, his talents, or his labour without giving him a fair payment in return. It condemns all dishonest gains, whether by the sale of inferior or adulterated articles, or by false weights and measures, or by any of the many false modes of obtaining money which in all commercial countries have such a tendency to multiply. It condemns all debts, whether of the poor man who gets what he can from the little shop in the neighbourhood without an effort to pay for it when work comes in, or of his superior, who, with far less excuse, indulges a love of luxury and splendour for which he, too, knows that he shall not pay. It is marvellous with what fine names and under what different forms men can be dishonest, in every trade, and station, and employment in life. Every day is revealing some fresh form of fraudulent practice, and against all of them the plain old words, "Thou shalt not steal," sound forth, breaking through the smooth forms of speech with which we gloss over our actions, and revealing them to us as they appear in the sight of God.

IX. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

The eighth commandment was against all falseness of action; this is against all falseness of speech. You may steal a man's character as well as his possessions; you may take from him by your speech even more than you can take from him by your hands. "From all evil speaking, lying, and slandering," we may well say, "Good Lord, deliver us." The sins of the tongue are so easily committed, and are so often beyond the cognizance of any authority, that they have ever been proverbial for their frequency. The exaggerated story of another's wrongdoing, the depreciatory judgments, the assigning an unworthy motive on slight foundation, the idle gossip hardly credited yet willingly repeated,—against each and all of these evils the commandment bears witness, and must we not confess we are daily falling into them? I say nothing of the bitter and darker aspect that they assume when our own personal interest is deeply involved, and we are speaking of those who have materially stood in our way, or have been successful rivals; but taking our ordinary social conversation, is there one of us who must not confess that we are verily guilty in this matter? Here, again, age, station, position in life, and even a religious profession, make but little difference, except in the form of the evil. I am afraid that an angel listening, whether in our cottages or palaces—amongst the young, eager to prove a companion unworthy of his place in class, or amongst their elders, discussing more important cases of promotion—in our "religious" social gatherings, or in our fashionable assemblies—would have the same sad record to give in, of harsh judgments and false

accusations freely made, and, above all, of the imputation of unworthy motives to the acts of those from whom we differ. I mention this last particularly, because it seems, sometimes, as though we had made up our minds that while it is wrong to impute low motives to the acts of those with whom we agree, it is by no means wrong to do so with regard to those from whom we differ, especially on religious subjects. It has been said, that it would be well to ask ourselves, before speaking of others, these questions: "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" It would, indeed, be well; though I am afraid it would sometimes stop our conversation altogether.

Slander takes a more criminal character still, when it is put forth to injure another's prospects, and to hinder his advancement in life; sometimes it can be punished by the law of the land, but very often it drops its baneful influence, and no one notices from whence it comes, except He who has stepped in and forbidden all false words against a neighbour, as a sin against Himself.

There is yet another application of this commandment. In reading the history of our own and other countries, we shall see how all civil justice and liberty are bound up in it. A fair trial—a prisoner confronted with his witnesses, and those witnesses bound, without let or hindrance, to speak the truth—these things lie at the foundation of civil justice, and are implied in the words, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." This commandment formed part of a nation's law when first given to the Jews, and set forth a very different administration of justice to that which put up the Lion's Mouth at Venice, to receive unsupported accusations, or permitted the *lettres de cachet*

of Paris. We can hardly have a greater evidence that these are Divine laws, than that which we find in the fact of their first principles meeting the needs and requirements of all ages and countries.

X. "Thou shalt not covet," &c.

The Church goes to the root of the matter in the lessons she gathers from this commandment, when she bids us "not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get our own living, and to do our duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us." Thus making the tenth commandment the law of labour. Labour for daily bread is, indeed, the law of God's world; it became the law when man fell from his first estate, and God sent him forth to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. The curse which cursed the ground and made it bring forth thorns and thistles, has been the blessing which has blessed man ever since. The seed of the woman, the second Adam, drew the sting from the curse, and, with the drops of His most precious blood, redeemed the earth on which they fell. Every day we are learning more and more that work and labour are the great blessings of life—that the very ground itself has been redeemed, and its hardness turned into its fruitfulness. The fertile land that needs no toil and labour—no sweat of man's brow—to keep it, sinks him into the lowest state of degradation; the sterile land, that needs them most, raises him to the highest civilization. And so is it with individuals. God has ordained that work and labour shall bring their own blessing to man, and an idle, envious, coveting spirit its own misery; the first often "having nothing and yet possessing all things;" the last often "having all things and yet

possessing nothing." For, like Ahab, a man may be king of all the land, and yet, if he covet one little vineyard, all his possessions are as nothing to him ; or, like Haman, he may be advanced "above all the princes with him ;" yet if he covet the homage of one man, though it be only of Mordecai sitting at the gate, all his honours and glory "avail him nothing." While on the other hand, like St. Paul, a man may work with his own hands, though it be only at tent-making, and yet be able to say, "I have all, and abound." A man who is labouring truly to get his own living, and to do his duty in the station to which God calls him, has an inward satisfaction and contentment, a sense of independence and freedom, which no outward advantages alone can bestow. Even more than this ; a man who has entered in spirit upon the inheritance to which in Christ he is called, and by faith is one with Him, sharing His triumphs and partaking of His joys, and, as St. Paul says, "working together with Him,"¹ may "be unknown, and yet well known ; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; poor, yet making many rich ; having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

This is the last commandment of the second table. We have seen that our Lord gathers up the whole of its teaching in the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." When the law of the new dispensation is fulfilled, the letter of the old dispensation shall pass away. In the meantime we must remember that our Lord's sermon on the mount is the great interpretation of the law to us, giving us the key to its full meaning, and showing us its spiritual requirements as well as its literal demands. It is impossible to go more fully

¹ See 2 Cor. vi. 1.

into the subject here, but the careful reading and examination of those chapters in Matthew should form part of your study, if you would really understand the third clause of your baptismal vow—"To keep God's holy will and commandments." This is the conclusion of that vow. The evil renounced—the faith professed—the obedience promised—have been glanced at, and now you must ask yourself "if you think you are bound to believe and do as your sponsors have promised for you?" In the answer which the Church gives you to this question—"Yes, verily, and I heartily thank our heavenly Father that He hath called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ," &c.—she shows you your true position in life. She speaks to you of the privilege of your baptism, not as a magic charm performed upon you in infancy, and now done with, but as a state into which you are brought, and in which God will keep you to your life's end, yet from which it is clear that you may wander, or you would not pray for God's grace to continue in it. The Church intends the Catechism to be a continual preparation for the time when you are to take those vows on yourself, and to accept your place in the ranks of the Church militant. She would educate you, through it, to bear your part in the home, and social, and national life to which you are called, faithfully, honestly, bravely, and well, doing its duties to God, and not to man. She never speaks to you of a religious life separate from a working life—the duties of your daily calling, she teaches you, are your duties to God; the faith of your creed is to be the rule of your life, for she has bid you believe in One who is to be your Example as well as your Saviour.

VI.

..... "More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain 'to Him,' night and day.
For what are men better than sheep and goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves, and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

THE LORD'S PRAYER—ITS CONNECTION WITH THE CREED
AND THE COMMANDMENTS—THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER
—DIFFICULTIES FELT IN REGARD TO IT—PRAYER NOT
A CHARM—THE OBJECT OF PRAYER—THE SUBJECT OF
PRAYER —PRAYER IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS—
THE SACRAMENTS—MEANING OF THE WORD—THE
MEMORIAL FEAST—THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY AND
BLOOD OF CHRIST—BENEFITS CONFERRED—PREPARATION
REQUIRED.

WE have considered our Baptismal Covenant and our Baptismal Vow, we come now to consider the means of grace, which God has given you, to help you to abide in that covenant, and to keep that vow. The Catechism tells each child that, though the articles of his creed may be true and orthodox, though his knowledge of God's law may be perfect, still he cannot walk in those commandments or keep that faith without His special grace. Further, that this "special grace he must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer." The child is then taught the Lord's Prayer, as the prayer which is his birthright as a child of God; as the prayer which is to be the model for all his prayers, in its devout reverence, in its trustful confidence, in its perfect submission, and in its intercessory character.

Having on a former occasion¹ taken each clause of the Lord's Prayer at some length, I shall, to avoid a repetition of what was then said, only consider it now briefly with reference to the position it here occupies, and then draw your attention more particularly to the subject of prayer as "a call for God's special grace," as it is spoken of in the Catechism.

You can hardly help remarking the intimate connection between the Creed, the Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer; indeed, the facts of the Creed and the requirements of the law form together the groundwork of its petitions. What has come from God as the revelation of Himself and of His will, we are, as it were, giving back to Him in prayer, that it may be perfectly fulfilled. We are taught to pray to "our Father which art in heaven," to worship the one true God,—the Father revealed in Christ,—the Father in heaven, and thus to own no other God but Him, to bow down to no image of power, or vengeance, or might,—to no outward symbol even of the true God, but to worship Him as Spirit in spirit and in truth. We are taught to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,"—asking in fact that those commandments of the first table regarding His name and day and government may be the law of our lives and of the world. We are taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and remembering that the law of labour is God's order for man, we here pray to be able to get our living honestly and truly, to be moderate and uncovetous in all our desires, and true and just in all our dealings. We are taught to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," thus asking God to grant individually

¹ Readings on the Morning and Evening Prayer.

to ourselves, and to all who need it, that "forgiveness of sins" in which we have professed our belief. We are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," in other words, deliver us from all the violent and malevolent passions, all the bitter enmities, and all the impure desires, against which Thy commandments have been witnessing. We are taught to say, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Thus declaring that we are in God's kingdom now, that His laws ought to be our laws, and yet looking forward beyond the kingdom of God on earth to its full development in heaven—"to the life everlasting." Thus we are taught that the faith of the kingdom, the law of the kingdom, and the prayer of the kingdom are all in perfect harmony.

By this prayer, placed in the Catechism immediately after the Creed and Commandments, the Church teaches us that it is not an intellectual faith requiring only the reasonable belief of the head, but a loving acceptance of the truths of the Creed into the heart, as the foundation of our intercourse with God, that she desires for us; that it is not only an assent to the laws of God that they are good, but a prayerful resolution to keep them, that she demands.

We have spoken of being brought into a state of salvation in our baptism, we have spoken of a spiritual life breathed into us by the Father of our spirits, we have seen that this life is beset with danger, that the world, the flesh, and the devil are bidding high to deprive us of it; and now we come to speak of that which is the very breath of this life, the great source of its strength, the mightiest weapon with which we may resist its enemies, even

prayer. Yet must we not confess that though we know that it is all this, still, that prayer is at times to us a dreary task, a duty to be done indeed, but often coldly, formally, and faithlessly? Why is it? There are many reasons which we might give, some to be found in our indifference, sluggishness, and indolence, in our carelessness and preoccupation in the things that surround us, in our love of excitement even in religious matters. Besides these reasons, however, of which our conscience tells us, there are also sometimes difficulties in our minds on the subject, which keep us back. There are times when we ask, "What is the use of prayer? God knows what is good for us, and He will give it us, if He intends to do so, whether we ask or not, and if He does not intend to give it, He will not do so for our asking; it is better to let the matter alone." We forget that prayer is but a part of one great and consistent whole, that God is educating us to know Him and to love Him, to trust Him, and to become like Him, that He is preparing us for perfect intercourse with Himself by and by. How can we know Him, if we have no communion with Him, if we never speak to Him, and never come into His presence? Prayer is our direct means of communion with God. Therefore that we might know Him, that we might be induced to hold intercourse with Him, that we might be raised out of ourselves to Him, He has bid us pray, even though "He knows our wants before we ask;"—those very wants He trusts will send us to Him. What is our first prayer? Is it not a cry for deliverance, a cry for help, or mercy, or strength? Further on in our Christian life, prayer and communion with God may become to us a necessary part of our daily life, but at first it is because we

know not where else to go for help that we go to God. Prayer is the child of need. It was the adversary pressing sore upon the widow that sent her to the judge, it is an adversary of some kind or other that first sends us to God. We might have gone before, but we did not care to go, and if we did not feel the goading of the adversary we should not go now. If it were true that prayer is unnecessary because God knows our wants before we ask, if we are to be content to receive our blessings simply as the order of some high power with whom we have no personal intercourse, God's promises would be equally unnecessary. It would be enough that we said to ourselves, that the Ruler of the world is a just and loving God, and does what is best. We should need neither promises from God nor prayers to Him, and thus we should become utterly and entirely separated from Him. We should cease to be children fed by His Fatherly hand, and sink simply into creatures but little raised above the world of animals who are dependent upon His laws without knowing it. But when He promised to hear our cry and to listen to the voice of our petitions, He was promising us that which should turn all the trials and troubles and wants of life into blessings by sending us to Him, and leading us to cast ourselves at His feet for help and strength. Is it not so? When have you really felt lifted into the presence of God? When have you, as it were, spoken to Him face to face? When have you been raised out of yourself? Has it not been when some great need or sorrow has driven you to Him, because you must find help somewhere, or die?

There is another and an opposite difficulty in some minds. I have heard more than once this

sad confession made: "I don't pray much now; I have asked God for so many things, and I never get any of them, that I don't see the use of going on with it." If this is your feeling do not shrink from saying so, it is always much better that the doubts and unbelief that are festering in the heart should be spoken out; it is far worse to feel them and get more and more callous and lifeless, as you must get, than to speak about them, and at least have the possibility of being helped. In such a case as this, it seems to me that you have altogether mistaken the meaning of prayer, and the character of God. To go in this way and ask for certain gifts from God, without regard to their fitness, or to His will, but simply because you have set your heart upon them, is not the intention of prayer at all. You are looking on prayer simply as a charm by which you may get what you wish for, or as a payment to God for certain coveted possessions. You are looking upon heaven only as a store-house which is to supply your wants, and upon the great God, the Father of your spirits, the Lord merciful and loving, who is educating men to know and trust in Him, as only the dispenser of its good things. This is indeed mistaking the whole meaning of prayer, and of the service of God, in fact it is no service of God at all, for it is simply asking Him to serve you. No wonder then that you found such so-called prayers useless, and no wonder that you left off such a service after a time altogether.

Let us see how far we can answer your difficulty and enter into the true meaning and intention of prayer from the words about it in the Catechism, and from the model there held up to us.

1. The object of prayer:—to obtain God's grace to keep our baptismal vow.

2. The subject of prayer :—that God's will may be done.

1. The object of prayer :—to obtain grace to keep our baptismal vow. The Catechism tells us that "we are not able to serve God without His special grace, for which we must at all times call by diligent prayer." Prayer is here set forth as the way in which we receive strength for our spiritual life; by it and through it we obtain God's special grace, in all hours of trial, in all the varying circumstances of our life. The inward promptings of our fallen nature, the suggestions of the Evil One, the outward snares of the world—these are the things that make it impossible for us to keep God's law of ourselves. It may be the law of sin which is in our members warring against the law of God,—or it may be some outward circumstance in our life which is the adversary that will surely overcome us, unless it force us to flee to the strong for strength. We promised in our baptismal vow to be God's faithful soldiers and servants; the very words speak of enemies to be resisted, of work to be done; but in whose strength? "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." We see at once the difference between the object of prayer that the Catechism brings before us, and our selfish, interested thoughts about it. The call for His special grace to keep His commandments, is the real object of prayer, for this is asking for strength to serve God, instead of simply seeking that God should serve us. All such prayer is of God's own appointment, and He is more ready to hear than we to pray. We are also taught to grow up in this privilege as our rightful inheritance, we are

taught that it is to be to us no extraordinary effort, but the daily practice of our lives, a practice that implies that we are trying to live according to God's law; for "if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." Prayer is the voice of a soul struggling with sin and Satan, striving to live to God; it is but a mocking sound in those whose lives are in continual opposition to Him. There may be, indeed, times in a man's life when great and terrible temptation comes upon him, and he cries aloud perhaps for the first time to God to help him to resist it, as for his very life, and God hears and answers him; no such cry has ever been sent up unheard. But prayer habitually practised by those who are living to themselves, who are, therefore, living during the greater portion of their day as if there was no God in the world, is but a dead letter, and can never reach the throne of God. May not this sometimes explain why our prayers are unheard? We cannot live to ourselves in our daily life, and live to God in our own hour of prayer; we cannot worship the God of this world in our public acts, and yet worship our Heavenly Father in our private devotion, for He Himself has said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." How completely then does the Catechism take us to the root of the whole matter, by bringing prayer before us as the devotional service of God, by which we are fitted for His practical service, as the call for His special grace to keep His law.

II. The subject of prayer:—that God's will may be done. If the object of prayer is to obtain grace to do God's will, its subject must be that His will shall be done now and evermore. To teach us this, the Lord's prayer is set forth as the model of

all prayer; the whole spirit of which is found in the words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

If we have accepted the Creed of the Church, we believe in a Father of infinite love, wisdom, and power, whose will is a perfectly wise and loving will, and therefore the Church teaches us that the most blessed thing we can ever ask, is that His will may be done. Can it be otherwise? can we suppose that by prayer we are ever to try and change the will of God? Would it not be the worst thing that could happen to us if we did? would it not be the worst evil that could befall us if our prayers were to make our will God's will, instead of God's will ours? Is not prayer the way that God has ordained for us to hold such communion with Him as shall change our wills to His perfect will, reflect in our hearts the peace of heaven itself, draw us up into perfect harmony with Himself?

Let us consider this more fully, for if we cannot do God's will without a right understanding of the object of prayer, still less can we submit to God's will without a right understanding of the subject of prayer. How often, especially when young, our whole happiness seems to depend on the attainment of a certain object, good and right it seems to us. We pray to God to give us this desire of our heart, we pray earnestly and faithfully, and for the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; many promises encourage us, they seem to assure us our prayer shall be granted. We do not pray to have the blessing *against* God's will, but the burden of our prayer has been that *it may be God's will*. It is in this we fail—we are distinctly looking to prayer to change God's purposes towards us. We ask not to have the coveted happiness without the will of God, but

we ask that His will may be to give it to us. Again, in some trial, we have prayed with passionate pleadings, and even with great faith for its removal, believing that God would surely hear us, but the burden of our prayer has still been that it may become God's will to grant our petitions. We have here, too, shrunk from asking for their fulfilment against His will, but we have not shrunk from praying Him to change His will. The sad and bitter disappointment that will often await us in these cases, falls upon us because we have so misunderstood the meaning of prayer, that we have almost brought ourselves to believe that the reward of great fervour in it is—what? That our wills, and not God's, should be done.

Here we find the answer to those two contradictory difficulties with regard to prayer, the one tempting us to think that it is of no use to pray, because God will do what is best whether we pray or not; the other, that it is no use to pray if we are not sure that the specific thing we ask for will be given us. We pray that our wills may be made like God's will, so that whether the special gift is granted, as in St. Peter's release from prison, or denied, as to St. Paul, we may be therewith content. We pray because our Father bids us pray; we pray because we are children who can trust His love and wisdom to give or to withhold as He sees best, sure of this, that if the actual gift is refused, He will yet send an answer of peace into our hearts, taking the bitterness from the trial, and the anguish from the sorrow, and saying to us, "My grace is sufficient for thee." What is true in praying for temporal blessings is equally true in praying for spiritual blessings. Nay, it is more dishonouring to God in the last case than in the first, to

suppose that our prayers are to change His will. That blessed will, which willeth not the death of a sinner, but willeth that all should come to repentance, that holy will by the which we are sanctified, which Christ came to fulfil when He laid down His life for the sheep, is surely not a will which our prayers must change before God will listen to our cry for mercy. We may cry mightily to the Lord for deliverance, and yet it will be no Baal-cry if we believe that it is sent forth to a Father whose will is our salvation. Sometimes we seem to imagine that in prayer we are entering into personal conflict with God, to obtain by our vehemence and earnestness, pardon, help, and salvation, forgetting how long He has been standing at the door of our hearts seeking admission, knocking and we have refused to hear.

The old heathenish superstition that our Lord rebuked seems still to linger among us, and we think that we shall be heard for our much speaking, ever forgetting that "He is more ready to hear than we to ask"—that the desire to pray has itself come from Him. In praying for others, especially among the young and ardent, there is a feeling, occasionally even put into words, that they will pray so earnestly for a friend's salvation, that God shall be therefore forced to hear and answer them; quite overlooking this truth, that the prayer, if it is to bring any blessing at all, must have been inspired by God Himself, and must simply ask that His perfect will shall be fulfilled. If under the influence of strong religious excitement you find yourself so thinking, just ask yourself this question,—“Is it likely that I love this soul or care for its salvation more than the God who breathed life into it,—than the Son who died to redeem it,—than the Spirit

who intercedeth in it with groanings that cannot be uttered?" God would have us sharers in His work, He would prepare us for the joys of heaven, where the angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, therefore He would have us seek in prayer that His will may be done in the hearts of others; but we must not reverse this, and suppose that we are inducing Him to do more good to others than of His own loving will He had intended. The greatest gift He can bestow upon us is to permit us to help one soul in its heavenward journey, but it is His gift, not as we sometimes speak of it,—a thing won by our vehement and faithful prayer. The same truth will help to correct our lukewarmness and coldness, as well as our fanaticism. We are apt to vibrate between the two. The reaction from the one often throws us into the other. But probably a still larger number of us have more reason to complain of an habitual coldness, indifference, and lukewarmness in prayer, than of anything else. It is only to impassioned natures, coming under strong religious excitement, that the temptation comes, to dishonour God by supposing their vehement pleadings are to wring unwonted gifts from Him; others are tempted to dishonour Him by want of earnestness and warmth altogether. What is the cause of this lukewarmness? Surely it generally comes from faint-heartedness and doubtings. We cannot believe that our prayers will be heard; we are out of heart altogether, and sadly settle down, not satisfied, yet not hopeful enough to pray earnestly for strength to do better. The remedy is the same in both cases. It is found in a deep conviction that the subject of all true prayer must ever be, "May Thy will be done," in the certain conviction that we go to a

God who is already a Father, to a Father who is already a Giver, even to Him "who, having already given us His only Son, will surely with Him freely give us all things." How can we think of entering into conflict with God in prayer, when the subject is that His will may be done? How can we be doubting and faint-hearted, when we know that, feeble though our will is, and weak and wavering though our desires after good may be, they yet are in harmony with the eternal will of God; that the Spirit hath already helped our infirmities, for without Him "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," and "that He maketh intercession for (or in) us according to the will of God."

"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name He will give it you." These words gather up and explain all our thoughts on prayer, they give us in one word its only limitation—that it must be offered in the name of Jesus Christ, and in that name they give us the certainty of its answer. When our prayer is not answered it can only be because it was not offered in the name of Christ. Let us consider this: if we offer any prayer in the name of another, we must offer it in his character and spirit, it must be a prayer that he would offer. If a petition is brought to an earthly sovereign in his son's name, it implies that it is a petition that the son himself would have made. When, therefore, we are bid to offer up our petitions in the name of Christ, it means not only that we are to offer them up for His dear sake, and trusting solely to His merits, but that we pray in His spirit as He would pray. We know how He prayed even in His great agony in the garden of Gethsemane: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." How

perfect is the submission of the words, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt;" and how inconceivably precious are also the words before, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." To know that even the Eternal Son of God prayed that if it were possible the trial might pass away, may support us in those rare moments of our life when we, too, being in an agony, would pray that the bitter cup might pass; to know that in this He felt with us, may give us strength to feel with Him, and go on to say, "Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

To use better words than my own, "Here at last we reach the true ground of prayer; the will, the absolutely perfect, unchangeable will of God; here, at last, we find its true explanation; the creature giving itself up to the Creator; man laying down his selfish separate existence that he may have eternal life in God; surrendering all, that he may win all, and finding in God Himself the fulfilment of every desire, the answer of every prayer." This carries our thoughts on to prayer as it is regarded by those who have passed from the eager hopes and fears of youth to the calm trust and submission of a life in which God's will is more and more all in all. To them, prayer is the communion of a heart set free from its own selfish and passionate yearnings, with the God in whom it has found peace and rest. It is the trustful intercourse of a child, who can rejoice in "the Father's changeless will above, that even good from evil brings;" and who is able to look forward hopefully to the time when that will shall at last be perfectly done on earth as it is in heaven. It is the loving response of a spirit made one with God's spirit, and able to say when the time comes, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word."

THE SACRAMENTS.

In the last portion of the Catechism, added in 1604, the Christian Sacraments are brought before us. We have already, at some length, considered the Sacrament of Baptism; we may now, therefore, chiefly direct our thoughts to that crowning gift of Christ to His Church, the last legacy of His love, the constant witness of His presence, even the communion of His body and blood.

It is with this high subject that the Catechism closes. It has carried us from our first admission into God's family to our education in its faith, obedience, and worship, up to its highest mystery; to that act of worship which is the crown of all our worship, to that which is the symbol of God's dwelling in us and we in God, the pledge of our life hid with Christ in God, the promise of our life to come, the offering up of ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice to God. To this all our Church teaching has been leading us; in this, all that we have learned is fulfilled. In the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, we can enter most fully into the Fatherhood of God—the sacrifice of the Son—the gift of the Spirit. In it we enter into “the communion of saints;” in it we are lifted above all outward differences of names and opinions, into fellowship with the whole Church militant here on earth, and with all those departed this life, who have sat down to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. In it our Creed once again becomes a living faith, and our worship, purified from all selfishness, partakes of the more glorious character of praise, as with angels and archangels “we laud and magnify His glorious name, evermore praising Him and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God

of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High. Amen."

The word *sacramentum* in classical writers, means an oath or promise ratified by a religious ceremony ; thus the oath taken by the soldier was called *sacramentum*. In strict conformity with this, its original signification, it was used at first to express only the promise made by Christians at baptism. From the act, the word was transferred to the ceremony by which it was ratified ; thus *sacramentum* came to signify any religious ordinance, and in general to stand for that which in Greek is expressed by the word mystery. It stood, therefore, for any emblematical notion of a sacred import—any external act having an inward meaning. In this extended sense it is obvious that there are many sacraments, and "as the word is not a Scriptural word," says Secker, "and has at different times been differently understood, the Catechism does not require us to say there are absolutely only two sacraments, but only two as generally necessary to salvation."¹ For these two Sacraments of the Gospel, it is necessary that there should be the visible sign, the spiritual grace, and the authority of Christ Himself, or, as the Catechism expresses it, that they be ordained by Christ Himself, "as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." It is not, that only in the Sacraments is grace conferred, or that here only God meets His children, but that in these means of His special appointing He has promised and does bestow His highest gifts of grace.

The Sacraments are the outward and visible signs and tokens of His love : even as He gave to the Jews a visible witness of His presence in the

¹ Hook's Church Dictionary.

shekinah above the mercy-seat, and of the pardon of their sins in the scape-goat, so in the Sacraments He gives us the outward sign of His presence, His forgiveness, and His love.

God who has bestowed upon us our outward bodies, as well as our inward souls, who gave us this sacramental nature in our own being, has never forgotten it in His dealings with us. Again and again has He given us the outward and visible sign with the inward and spiritual grace. He has in this sense filled our lives with sacraments. In the beauty of the outward world what have we but the visible sign of His loving providence? In the repose of sunset, in the morning dawn, what have we but the visible sign of rest and renewed life, which day by day He gives the world? In the deep unfathomable blue above our heads, what have we but the visible sign of the eternal life beyond? In the look of sympathy and affection upon the face of those we love, what have we but the visible sign of the inward grace? These are all God's sacraments of nature: while still more distinctly is this sacramental character found in all our religious acts—in worship, confirmation, ordination, marriage. In each of these there is the outward symbol of the inward grace; nay, more, God would transform our whole life itself into a sacrament, as by degrees He makes its daily acts, and words, and works the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. This, however, is only using the word sacrament in its general and enlarged meaning; in its highest and restricted meaning there are but two sacraments, the sacraments of the Gospel instituted by Christ Himself, and which gather up our lives into themselves—Baptism and the Supper of our Lord.

The Sacrament of Baptism brought us into a

state of salvation, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to keep us in that state. We have seen that there was nothing magical in the influence of Baptism, that it was not a ceremony performed over us and done with, but that its blessings were to be ever with us; the new life it sealed to us was to be nourished by prayer and strengthened by the Spirit, or it would wither away. So neither is there anything magical in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; it is the highest means ordained of God to renew and preserve that life. It is given to us for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of Him whose death was the world's life; it is given that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed in His most precious blood. It is to this, the highest mystery of your faith, that Confirmation admits you; into the full comprehension of its meaning none may hope to enter till they sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb; but even to the youngest and the feeblest who partake of it in faith, is it in part revealed. We cannot think of it too highly, yet we cannot think of it too simply. Lest we lose ourselves in the greatness of the subject, it will be well still to confine our attention to the Catechism, which brings before us—

1. Why it was ordained. As a memorial feast.
2. Its essential character. The communion of the body and blood of Christ.
3. The benefit it bestows.
4. The preparation it requires.

1. Why it was ordained.—The Catechism first tells us that it was ordained “for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.” On

that last evening in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, when the final Passover was finished, the Lord of Life still lingering with His disciples, knowing that it was the last time that they should ever so meet, looking forward to "the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion," which the next few hours were to witness to the Church's whole history through after generations, when the story of His dying love should fall on men's hearts like the tale of other times, then instituted this feast. We read that after supper "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me:" and so with the cup, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is My blood of the New Testament." You have been feeding on the Paschal Lamb in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt, as a type of the sacrifice to-morrow to be offered; that type is now fulfilled, and in its place I bid you eat this bread and drink this wine in remembrance of a greater deliverance. While an apostle adds, "As oft as ye do it, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Thus in the sacrament, as in the passover, we look back and forwards—back with thankfulness to the deliverance effected on Calvary, and forwards to a yet more glorious deliverance at His coming again, when this last enemy shall be destroyed, and all things shall be subdued unto Him.

In the earliest record of the keeping of this feast in the Acts, it is spoken of simply as "the breaking of bread." Christ had been with them so lately, they looked for His coming again so quickly, that the links that bound them to His personal presence seemed scarcely broken. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and

in breaking of bread . . . and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Once and again had He, the Giver of the feast, after His resurrection made Himself known to them in breaking of bread, and it must have been very difficult for them fully to understand that He would do so with an outward and visible presence no more. In those early days when the last rays of His ascending glory still shone upon the little company of believers, and they met day by day with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, doubtless they at first hoped each day that they might again behold the form they loved; that again He would stand in the midst, and their eyes see Him. Only by degrees they learnt that He whom they had seen ascend had really vanished from their sight, and would be no more amongst them as before; and even then they long continued to expect His speedy return to judge the world, and take possession of His kingdom. As the truth gradually dawned on the Church that her Lord was not yet returning, that she must walk by faith and not by sight, that years on years should come and go, and still find her looking for His return; that empires should rise and fall, and generation after generation be gathered into the courts above, and still the Church militant should not become the Church triumphant, nor the cry be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh;" the first simple celebration of the breaking of bread in singleness and gladness of heart passed away, and the fuller meaning of the sacrament was revealed as a witness of the spiritual presence of the Lord with His Church, of her continual union and communion with Him. As time went on, superstition began to gather round this sacrament,

destroying its simplicity and distorting its meaning, yet no fond inventions of men could entirely obscure its blessed witness for Christ in the world and in men's hearts. Thank God it could not exist in the world at all without being a memorial of a love stronger than death, without being an assurance of Christ's continual presence in His Church, without teaching men in some degree to believe that their redemption had been wrought out on the cross. We, to whom a purer faith has given back this blessed Sacrament in its simpler form and truer meaning,—as the remembrance of a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice offered once for all, have cause to ask ourselves if we really believe and rejoice in its message. Do the words, “for a continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ,” awaken any response in our hearts? We do not care for the remembrance of a thing, if we do not care for the thing itself; we cannot, therefore, care for the Sacrament if we do not care for the sacrifice. We must have seen hanging on that cross on the hill-side above Jerusalem, not only the man Christ Jesus dying a death of agony and shame, but we must have seen in His death the sacrifice for the sin of the whole world; we must have seen in His death the opening to us of the gate of everlasting life; we must have seen in His death the one thing that we could henceforth for ever trust, the one thing that must be true whatever else might prove a lie, even the great and unspeakable love of the Father, Son, and Spirit to the world. We may not be able to unravel the mystery of that sacrifice—who can?—but we must have a real, deep, heartfelt faith in the deliverance it wrought out before “the continual remembrance of it” will awaken any response in our hearts.

It is, then, first, as the Eucharist, or sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for the redemption of the cross; as the remembrance "of the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world," that we are bid to gather round the Table of the Lord.

II. Its Essential Character.—The Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. The Catechism goes on to say that bread and wine are the outward sign of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. This Sacrament is, then, not only a memorial of Christ's death and passion, but a partaking of His body and blood. It is to be to us not only a remembrance *of* Him, but a union *with* Him, for in remembering His death we are to partake of His life. "Take and eat this," are the words used in the Communion Service, "in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving." "The daily enjoyment of the Communion" was held in many of the early Churches "to be necessary, because they looked upon it as the daily bond of union between the Lord and His Church, and the daily means of strengthening and enlivening, and salvation, for Christians." It was also a witness to them of their union with each other and with those gone before, and so it was celebrated on the anniversary of the death of a friend in the consciousness of an inseparable communion with those who had died in the Lord.

But it is of more even than this that the Catechism speaks in the words, "The Body and Blood of Christ which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye

have no life in you," were Christ's own words. These words were spoken shortly before the first communion of His body and blood, in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, was celebrated, and must have come to the Apostles' minds when, almost using the same words, Christ bid them partake of His Body and Blood.

The Jews who heard our Lord strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Christ did not answer their cavillings, but went on to declare that He was the bread of life—the bread that came down from heaven, adding, "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." Thus teaching us that He was not careful to satisfy those who only "strove among themselves" about such questions; though He would answer, even by manifesting Himself to them, all true seekers after eternal life. Had the Jews, instead of cavilling, said, like the Samaritan woman, "Lord, give us of this bread," they, too, would have been led to say, "Is not this the Christ?" While even to those cavilling at the expression, that He would give them His flesh to eat, there was an answer, had they cared to understand it, in the words, "This is the bread of life that came down from heaven," for it might have shown them that it was not more necessary for them to believe that Christ was real *bread* that had come down from heaven, than to believe that it was His real flesh that He had bid them eat, but that both expressions pointed to some truth lying beneath the words, which He would make manifest to them. Their fathers' temporal life had been sustained by manna sent from heaven, their own spiritual and eternal life should be sustained by Him who was the true bread of life come down from heaven.

This they might have understood if they would, though how He should give His flesh for the world's life, how He should offer Himself up a willing sacrifice, and become from henceforth the life of all men, they could not have understood then, neither indeed did the disciples themselves.

We cannot doubt that in partaking of the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in simple, unquestioning faith we are fulfilling those words of His, and are made in it partakers of His life, though we know that His words were not confined to the Sacrament, and that many who have never partaken of it have yet "eaten of His flesh, and drank of His blood, and received eternal life." We then, who know that "Christ our passover hath been sacrificed for us, ought indeed to keep the feast," yet we, too, stumble at the words of our Lord, and "strive among ourselves and say, How shall this man give us His flesh to eat?" To this question, so asked, He will not now, any more than then, give an answer. If we care really to enter into His meaning, if we care really to feed on Him and not to cavil at His words, or condemn one another, then we shall say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," and from that prayer He will never turn away. This brings us to the third point in the Catechism, the benefits we receive in this sacrament.

III. Its benefits.—"The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our Bodies are by the Bread and Wine." The life that came from Christ is in this sacrament renewed by Christ. It has become weak, in this sacrament it shall be "strengthened"; it has grown faint and languid, in this sacrament it shall be "refreshed." By the fraud and malice of the Devil, by our own carnal will and frailty, by the tempt-

ations of the world, by the seductions of pleasure, by the business and turmoil of the outward life, this divine life, the life that Christ has given us, is continually impaired ; in this sacrament Christ bids us feed on Him and renew it. As the bread and wine renew and invigorate our bodily life—how we cannot tell—so in like manner shall the body and blood of Christ, “ which is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful,” renew their spiritual life,—how we cannot tell.

It is the sap of the vine passing up into the branches and giving them fresh vigour, it is the life blood of Christ flowing through all His members, and making His strength perfect in their weakness.

“ Take and eat by faith Christ’s body : drink by faith His blood, and be

Ever thankful and believing, flesh and blood were given for thee.

Then the peace of God be with thee, heavenly peace that knows no strife :

These preserve thee, soul and body, unto everlasting life.”

IV. The preparation it requires.—We might have thought that nothing but the most highly-wrought feeling, the highest attainment of faith, the deepest anguish of repentance, could fit us to approach this holy sacrament. But very differently does the Catechism teach us. *Sincerity* is the one great feature it brings before us. Sincerity of repentance, of intention, and of faith ; to these it adds a thankful remembrance of Christ’s death, and to be in charity with all men. This sacrament is to be to us the ordinary food of our spiritual life, and therefore all that it requires is just those feelings that will enable us to accept its blessing. Repentance,—or what to us is the forgiveness of sins? a steadfast purpose to lead a new life,—or what to us is Christ’s promised

strength to enable us to do so? faith in God's mercy through Christ,—or what to us is the meaning of the whole service? charity to all men,—or how can we come to a feast which is in remembrance of Him who prayed for His murderers—"Father, forgive them;"—a feast which has in all ages of the Church been a feast of love, and union, and communion—a feast which is the memorial of a love deep, boundless, and unutterable?

We saw, in speaking of the sacrament of baptism, that God only requires that no bar be put to the reception of His blessings, therefore all that is required of us in partaking of the communion, is, that state of mind that shall not hinder the descent of His blessing on us. Repentance, faith, charity are not required as high graces and virtues, which, being pleasing to God, will be the means of bringing down His blessing on us, but simply as necessary to withdraw the bar that sin, unbelief, and hatred would interpose to our reception of His gifts.

In this great Christian truth we have the answer to those doubts and difficulties that we gather up into the phrase—"I am not good enough to go to the Communion." If by this you mean that you deliberately choose to live in sin, unbelief, and hatred, it would indeed be a mockery for you to go up to the Sacrament of the Lord, as it is for you to go to His church, or at any time to His throne of grace; but if it means that you fear that the sin, unbelief, and hatred in which you have lived must keep you away, then in that very fear you may find a hope that you desire the bar to be withdrawn, you have not to wait to attain any goodness, you have simply to examine yourself, to see that no lurking desire to keep your sins and yet be saved from their consequences is there.

If you have but a sincere sorrow for sin, a sincere desire to be delivered from it, a sincere trust in the love of God in Christ, and a readiness to forgive others as you hope to be forgiven, you are invited to come and partake of this Sacrament of the Lord. In proportion as you grow in the knowledge of the things of God, and attain to a fuller and deeper acquaintance with Him, all your thoughts about the Sacrament itself, and the continual preparation it requires, will deepen also. It is in partaking of it that they will deepen; you will value it far more by going to it than by staying away to get a truer value before you think that you are fit to come. It is meant to be the food of your whole lives, becoming more and more precious as life goes on, Christ revealing Himself to you in it more and more, till after supporting you through all the conflicts and temptations of this mortal life, it will give you strength to face even the last enemy, and to enter into the valley of the shadow of death.

We have now glanced at each subject which the address in the Confirmation Service points out as forming a necessary preparation for its candidates. According to your time and opportunity you will, I trust, follow these subjects out. I have only attempted to awaken your interest in them, by trying to show you that they do not lie apart from your daily life, but are intimately connected with it. That they are subjects which ought to be mixed up with all you do,—with your home life, social life, and national life,—because they all refer to that Divine life which must penetrate and influence your whole life, and to Him in whom that life exists, who claims you, your body, soul, and spirit, for Himself.

I imagine that the Church intended, by the

preparation which she requires for Confirmation, to bring before you the blessings of your whole Christian inheritance. She would have you taught so to estimate the value of its laws, the greatness of its privileges, and the glory of its King, that you cannot but choose to come forward and be confirmed His faithful soldier and servant, with an ardent desire so to receive His Spirit that you may be kept faithful to your allegiance, true to your work to the end. And this may God in His mercy grant!

“Glory be to God on high, and peace on earth, good will to all;

So we praise Thee, so we bless Thee, so before Thy feet we fall.

Son of God, Son of the Father, let Thy mercy on us stay,
Thou that from our world of evil takest all the sin away.

Thou at God's right hand that sittest, Thou that ever reignest there,

Have Thou mercy, have Thou mercy on us; O, receive our prayer.

For Thou only art most holy, for Thou only art the Lord,
Highest in the Father's glory, with the Spirit, Thou the Word.”

G. B.

VII.

"The young ones gathered in from hill and dale,
 With holiday delight on every brow ;
 'Tis passed away, for other thoughts prevail ;
 For they are taking the baptismal vow
 Upon their conscious selves ; their own lips speak
 The solemn promise. * * * *
 * * * * The Omnipotent will raise
 Their feeble souls : and bear with *his* regrets,
 Who, looking round the fair assemblage, feels
 That ere the sun goes down their childhood sets."

WORDSWORTH.

THE CHOICE—THE ACCEPTANCE—THE CONFIRMATION
 PRAYER—THE SPIRIT'S STRENGTHENING POWER—THE
 SEVENFOLD GIFTS—THE ACT OF CONFIRMATION—THE
 PRAYER—GOD'S CONTINUAL PRESENCE WITH US—THE
 COLLECT—THE BLESSING.

THE few weeks of interest and preparation for the Confirmation are over, and the day comes when the solemn choice of your life is made. "Choose you this day whom you will serve," was Joshua's solemn proposal to the children of Israel as they stood on the borders of the promised land. "Choose you this day whom you will serve," is the solemn proposal put to each one of you as you are about to enter upon the rich inheritance that lies before you. God has done His part ; He has watched over you during your unconscious infancy, He has preserved you during your growing childhood, He has strengthened your body, He has expanded your mind, He has brought you to the borders of life, which now, as a fair field, lies spread out before you, and in the distance are the gates of the Eternal City. On the threshold He bids you pause and say whether you will accept your birthright or reject it. The birthright is yours ; but you have the power of

keeping it or of rejecting, even as Esau of old. The birthright was his ; he, too, might have kept it ; but it was of so small account in his eyes, it had so few present advantages, its blessings were so little valued by him in comparison with the present gratification of his animal desires, that he sold it for a mess of pottage.

The world, the flesh, and the devil have each their mess of pottage waiting as you enter on life, with which they would bid for your birthright, and, if possible, cheat you of it. God does not coerce you to accept it, He will help and strengthen you to do so ; but the choice is before you, and you must not shrink from it. "Let me be Thine by the choice of my will," was Bishop Wilson's prayer. The only service worthy of God's acceptance from you is the free-will offering of the heart. His service must be the choice of your own independent will, for if it were a matter of pure necessity or force, all loving service is at an end, there is neither good nor evil left. You become in such a case like the rocks and stones, the wind and rain, the fields and flowers, which all fulfil the purpose of God whether they will or no. "What they do *willessly*, we should do willingly," it has been said. God the Father, Son, and Spirit will help you in this choice, will do all and everything for you, save annihilate good and evil alike by forcing you to accept your birthright by a fiat of omnipotence, and thus to become machines acted upon by an irresistible power, instead of responsible beings, made in the image of God, and drawn to Him by His love. You cannot accept your birthright without the Spirit, you cannot come to God except He draws you ; but His Spirit has been given, you are living under its dispensation, He is drawing you, He

has been drawing the whole world ever since Christ's sacrifice was offered up,—“I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” To you, therefore, the words can be addressed in truth, and not in mockery,—“Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Within the walls of God's house, your Father's house, in the midst of a solemn service, the question is put to you.

Then shall the Bishop say,

“Do ye here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which your god-fathers and godmothers then undertook for you?”

And every one shall audibly answer—

“I do.”

You were sleeping the unconscious sleep of infancy when first you were given to God; but here, with steadfastness of purpose, and humble confidence in His love and strength to keep you now and evermore, you offer yourself to His service, and accept the vow that pledges you to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to remain Christ's faithful soldier and servant to your life's end. This, then, is the open confession of God as your God, of Christ as your Master, of the Christian faith as your faith,—this is the response you make to the grace sealed to you in Baptism, this is the pledge of your allegiance to the Church constituted in Him. Looking back to the early times of the Church's history, it was such a confession as this that men made when the choice was to confess Christ and die, or to deny Him and live. By it you accept your place in the ranks of the Church

militant,—the place of confessors, martyrs, and saints, the place which your forefathers throughout their generations have taken; you accept your post in the Christian army, promising to fight manfully under its banner against the enemies of the Cross, as God shall give you strength, even as those who have gone before you have done, till you join them in the ranks of the Church triumphant.

What the baptismal vow you here accept is, we have already considered; it is the vow in which, after renouncing the devil and his works, the pomps and vanities of the world, the sinful lusts of the flesh, you accept the Creed as your rule of faith, and the Ten Commandments as your rule of life; the vow of renunciation, faith, and obedience, that occupied us in the previous chapters. I shall, therefore, only now speak of its concluding words—"to your life's end."

The vow you take on your Confirmation morning is not for to-day or to-morrow; as years go on you may have a dimmer and dimmer recollection of the hour when you knelt before God and His Church and accepted your baptismal vow, yet will this vow be with you to help and strengthen you in the daily fight against sin and God-forgetfulness. You may fall again and again, but this vow is not set aside; you took it with honesty of purpose "to your life's end," it is, therefore, on you still, and may strengthen you to rise and claim the pardon and love then covenanted to you.

There are moments in our life when we are lifted above the things seen and temporal to the things unseen and eternal, when we are brought up into the very presence of God, when we, too, are caught up in spirit to the heaven above us, and see, for one passing moment, our lives, and the world's life, by

the light that is around the throne. Sometimes such a revelation may not come till this life is darkened with sorrow, and it may be that you are kneeling by the bed of sickness, which is soon to be the bed of death, of some dear and loved one ; sometimes it may be given even in the brightness of youth, as you kneel at God's altar and offer yourselves up to Him to your life's end. Then, seeing your life as God sees it, you will indeed rejoice that the only way in which, in the first flush of its youth, you have looked forward to its end, is by the vow of remaining Christ's faithful soldier and servant. How often, as you stand on the threshold of life, your thoughts travel forward into the future, and bright visions open upon you of all that you hope to be and to do ; but very rarely do they travel on to the time when the visions and their fulfilment shall alike appear as a tale that is told ; and it is better that they should not, for it would be wrong to cloud the sunshine of the morning with the clouds of the evening ; but this once, on your Confirmation morning, you are bidden to look forward, not sadly, but bravely and trustfully, to the end,—to an end, indeed, that shall be better even than the beginning, for he that girdeth on his armour cannot rejoice as he that taketh it off. You have accepted your place in Christ's army, and the colours have been given into your keeping ; on the banner are the words, " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life ; " through how much of warfare and struggle, of hardship and danger, of victory and defeat, they will lead you, you know not ; but, by God's help, you vow so to keep them, that when the battle of life has been fought out, and the end come, you may hear your great Captain's voice pronounce the words, " Well

done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The Bishop. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Answer. Who made heaven and earth.

How thoroughly does this short versicle answer the rising feeling in your hearts. Surely the question struggling there is, "Lord, who is sufficient for these things?"—"our help is in the name of the Lord," in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, into which we were baptized. In the name of "the Father who pitieth His children,"—of the Son "who is touched with a feeling of their infirmities,"—of the Spirit who already intercedeth for them. If you have shrunk back from the greatness of your calling, these words must reassure you, for "greater is He that is with you than all they that can be against you."

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Henceforth, world without end.

You may think it long to look forward to your life's end, but He who is with you shall not only help and strengthen you all the days of your life, but each generation that shall take your place, even as He has helped each generation that has gone before from the beginning to the end. Your heart and your flesh may fail, but He to whom you have devoted them is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Lord, hear our prayers,
And let our cry come unto Thee.

Let our prayers come unto Thee now, as we offer to Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, praying Thee to strengthen them and keep them faithful unto death ; and let our cry come unto Thee in all

times of fierce struggle and great temptation, and when most hardly pressed and almost overcome, send us an answer of strength.

The Bishop. Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy servants by Water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins: Strengthen them, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them Thy manifold gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength; the spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of Thy holy fear, now and for ever. Amen.

You have confessed your faith, you have offered up yourselves to God's service, you have acknowledged from whom cometh your help, the Bishop now asks God for the gift that is to confirm and strengthen you. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The prayer distinctly asserts that God has vouchsafed to regenerate you by water and the Holy Ghost, that He has forgiven you all your sins; these blessings are already yours, but you stand on the brink of a new life and responsibility, for which you are to receive the pledge of the sanctifying power of the Comforter, as at your baptism you received the pledge of His regenerating power.

Confirmation is, then, the great witness to us that we are living under the dispensation of the Spirit. It is in this way essentially a Christian ordinance, the outpouring and indwelling of the Spirit being the marked characteristic of the Christian dispensation. As the Litany is the service directly devoted to Christ as the Son of Man, so is Confirmation the service directly devoted to the Spirit as the indwelling Comforter. We have already touched upon this point, indeed it so pervades the whole meaning of the service, that it must meet us again and again,

either in considering the service or the preparation it requires. We have seen that we are often tempted to overlook the very end and object of Confirmation, because we find it difficult to understand the value of its great gift of the indwelling Spirit. Pardon and forgiveness we can understand, faith and love we can understand, but this inward working of the spirit we cannot enter into. Yet if it be not very true and real, this Confirmation Service is a mockery. The prayer that we have just read will help us, I think, to understand this gift.

"Strengthen them, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter," are its opening words. In our first chapter we found that to Confirm meant to strengthen, to build up, to render steadfast; and of the different kinds of Confirmation, that the highest was the strengthening of our characters. We may have our words confirmed, and our promises confirmed, and we may have ourselves, our own characters confirmed; and this last is the highest Confirmation. That you have yourselves felt and received this confirming influence at some time in your life I feel sure. It may have been an elder and higher-minded brother to whom you looked up with a loving reverence, it may have been a gentle sister on a bed of suffering, that so influenced you, that they confirmed you for a time in the right way. You could not explain the influence,—perhaps were not fully aware of it,—yet you know that angry and violent feelings have been repressed, that untrue, bad, and malicious words have been unspoken, that indolence and love of ease have been conquered simply by the influence of that spirit over you; you must, then, confess that it was a real and powerful, though an unseen and spiritual influence. What was it?

Whence came its power? "Every good and perfect gift," every high and holy influence, "is from above," and cometh down from the Father of our spirits. You may be sure that you never felt an influence for good over you, but that its power came from the Spirit of God. To influence you, by and through your family affections, is the Spirit's frequent mode of working, and what He has thus often done during your life indirectly, the Church prays that He will do directly at your Confirmation. She prays, that the Holy Spirit, who has alone given the power to any good influence ever exerted over you, may now Himself be given to you; that in a higher way than you have ever felt the influence of an earthly friend, He may now enter into your heart and strengthen you.

This first petition in the prayer, for strength, evidently refers to its influence on your whole inner life. It does not ask that you may be made strong in one thing more than another. It does not ask that your faith, or your love, or your repentance may be strengthened, but that you yourself, your whole inward being, may be filled with the Spirit's strengthening influence. Have you ever known what it is to rise weak and feeble from a long and lowering illness, weak in mind, nerves, and physical strength, yet with no other malady but this all-pervading weakness? In this enfeebled state you are sent to the sea-side, or to some bracing mountain country, and there day by day you have been strengthened. It is not this or that power by itself that returns in full force, but that your whole frame is gradually strengthened. As you watch the waves roll in, breaking quietly over the sandy beach, your old love of boating returns, and you long to be out on the more boisterous sea beyond; or, as you

gather strength from the fresh mountain air, your old love of flowers or fossil hunting returns, and you are no longer content to linger at its foot, but each morning sees you rising earlier and mounting higher in search of some desired specimens. You are thus strengthened in your whole frame, you yourself are strengthened, for with your bodily strength, your tastes and interests have returned. This may be some hint to you of the meaning of the prayer, "Strengthen them, O Lord, we beseech Thee, with the Holy Ghost." Fill them, O Lord, with the strength of Thy Spirit, that it shall influence their whole character. Strengthen them, so that sorrow may not find them repining, nor temptation find them weak, nor difficulties find them vacillating. Strengthen them so that they may be found courageous on the side of right, unmoved by the sneers of companions, who would have them think vice fine, and idle self-indulgence fashionable. Strengthen them by no magic charm, but by the constant indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit.

Can there ever be a time in your lives when this prayer is so much needed as now? just as you are going forth into life, when the first stand has to be made against evil. Cowardice, however little we may like to admit it, constantly besets us all, but especially at the beginning of our Christian life. How often are you tempted to allow, and perhaps join in, the laugh at sacred things, simply from want of courage to differ from those around! Or, again, to say what is not true, because you are afraid of giving offence, or to accept a companionship of which you heartily disapprove, or to go into scenes from which you inwardly shrink, simply because you have not the courage to decline. This want of moral courage to stand firm to what we

know to be right and really wish to do besets all classes alike. "It will not do to be singular, and not to join in their way of talking and going on," is, in some form or other, the timid confession of most whose work, business, study, or pleasures bring them much into contact with others. This prayer, therefore, goes to the root of the matter in asking that you may be strengthened day by day. How God has heard this prayer we know, in the steadfast resistance made by gentle, timid natures to evil,—by the daily prayer said in face of sneering companions,—by the fault confessed, to the loss of worldly gain,—by the refusal to take part in a deception planned by others, and often by the most nervous and retiring of the number. Thus strengthened the weak have become strong, and the feeble valiant, and the timid bold, fulfilling Christ's words, that the meek shall inherit the earth, for they have conquered where those who have despised them have fallen.

This Collect has, with very little variation, been used in the Church from the earliest times; it is probably older than the Sacramentary of Gelasius (494 A.D.). In the original form it runs thus:—"Pour into them Thy sevenfold Spirit, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, amen; of knowledge and piety, amen; of counsel and strength, amen;" &c. The word "piety," or, as in our service, "true godliness," was added to the gifts of the Spirit enumerated in Isaiah xi. 2, to make the number seven.¹ The Collect is evidently an adaptation of the passage in Isaiah,²—"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."

¹ Procter.

² Isaiah xi. 2.

We have already seen how completely our common daily life is to be penetrated and influenced by that higher life to which in Christ we are called. We have seen that there are but two kingdoms in the world, the kingdom of God its rightful King, and the kingdom of Satan the usurper; that they are side by side; that order is the law of God's kingdom, and disorder of Satan's; that love, righteousness, and truth are the principles of God's kingdom, and hatred, evil, and falsehood of Satan's.

We have seen that there is no neutral territory in the world, that there are no outlying provinces belonging neither to God or Satan, so neither can there be a neutral territory in our hearts, or any outlying posts of our life that belong neither to God or Satan. I do not in the least mean that always and on every subject we shall distinctly to ourselves recognize this truth, but that the spirit that pervades our lives, and consequently our interests, pursuits, and daily acts, must be the spirit of the one kingdom or of the other, and that from this nothing is excluded. We cannot believe that art, science, knowledge, and wisdom belong to some neutral territory and not to God, when we read these words of Isaiah and of our Confirmation Service, in which we ask to receive of God's Spirit daily the gift of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and ghostly strength, of knowledge and true godliness, and to be filled with the Spirit of God's holy fear. From these gifts nothing is excluded that concerns our daily life, as well as our spiritual well-being. No distinction is made between secular and spiritual gifts, for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, as well as ghostly strength, godliness, and god-fearing, are alike asked for as God's gifts.

We have seen that we may use our gifts, whether of knowledge, or of religious and personal attainments, or our worldly possessions, in such a manner that they shall only administer to our own glory and honour, and to the gratification of our own self-indulgence. But in such cases we are perverting them to lower uses than He who gave them had intended. The gifts themselves are God's gifts, but we have carried them into the service of the usurper. As the golden candlestick, whose lights had for generations burnt in honour of the Lord God of Israel, whose original design came from Him, whose whole meaning centred in Him, was taken to grace the triumph of the Roman conqueror, who had destroyed His temple and desolated His city, so are gifts often perverted from the service of God the giver to the honour of His rival. Music, painting, eloquence, how easily may these gifts of God be perverted from the end He had in view, and offered up on the altar of our own vanity and selfishness! Yet, in the very language we use as regards others in such cases, we show that we recognize from whence they come. We speak of a man's misusing his gifts, perverting his talents, abusing his powers, which he is not doing, unless they have been given him by One higher than himself to use in righteousness. If they come from himself, they may be used for himself; if they come from the evil one, they may be used for the evil one; but if they come from God, they must be used for God—as God would have them used.

And not only may personal gifts be perverted, but knowledge itself. For instance, the science of chemistry may be made, by evil men, subservient to the worst purposes of dishonesty, fraud, or violence; but this no more prevents our accepting

the science itself—the power of reading the secrets of God's world—as His gift, than gluttony and drunkenness—men's abuse of God's gift of food—prevent our acknowledging with David that food *is* God's gift, that “He bringeth forth food out of the earth for the service of man, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man.”¹ Surely, the greatest safeguard in beginning life that you can have, to keep you from perverting your personal talents and powers to evil, is the absolute conviction that they come from God—are His gifts—gold which bears His impress, and which must, therefore, not be used as coin in the kingdom of His rival. The truth for which this collect witnesses, in asking for us the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit—the whole rich inheritance of knowledge and wisdom, and godliness, therein contained—is surely this, that as our personal powers of mind and body are God's gifts, they must be used according to His will; and that, as all knowledge comes from Him, it should lead us to Him. When the mind, as it were, breaks its shell, and begins for the first time “to think for itself,” there is a strong temptation to imagine that it not only thinks *for* itself, but *of* itself; that it is indebted to its own strength and wisdom only for its knowledge: whereas we may be sure of this, that the change that has come over it, can only be a blessing in as far as it leads us to cease from human help and authority, to seek more directly for the teaching of the indwelling Spirit to lead it into all truth.

“When the soul, growing clearer,
Sees God no nearer :
When the soul, mounting higher,
To God comes no nigher !

¹ See Ps. civ. 14, 15.

But the arch-fiend Pride
Mounts at her side,
Foiling her high emprise,
Sealing her eagle eyes,
And, when she fain would soar,
Makes idols to adore ;
Changing the pure emotion
Of her high devotion
To a skin-deep sense
Of her own eloquence :
Strong to deceive, strong to enslave—
Save, oh ! save."

The prayer asks first for "the spirit of wisdom and understanding"—that "spirit of wisdom and understanding" spoken of in Ex. xxviii. 3, and xxxv. 25, 26, 31, 35, and xxxvi. 1, 2, as the foundation of all necessary practical knowledge in the common arts of life ; that "spirit of wisdom and understanding" spoken of in Deut. iv. 6, as leading men to keep God's law, knowing it to be for their good—"Keep, therefore, and do them ; for this is your wisdom and your understanding ;" that spirit of wisdom such as the Lord gave Solomon in 1 Kings iii. 12, and v. 12—"A wise and understanding heart," such as fitted him to perform rightly the duties of life to which he was called ; that spirit of wisdom which Solomon himself describes throughout the book of Proverbs, and of which he says, "Get wisdom ; and in all thy getting, get understanding." Above all, that spirit of wisdom St. James describes in his third chapter and seventeenth verse—"The wisdom that is from above," &c., and for which St. Paul prays for his converts in Eph. i. 17, 18, "That God may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him," &c. Wisdom seems to be the power in great matters and small, in things temporal and spiritual, of accepting, appreciating, and applying all kinds

of knowledge, whether it be practical knowledge, such as is spoken of in Deuteronomy, or the knowledge of that which is true and right, as in the book of Proverbs; or divine knowledge, as in the New Testament: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." What a promise with which to begin life, if we would only use it! It is the promise of a gift without which the highest talents are often useless, for we know not how and when to apply them. It is a gift that makes us humble, and so able to learn; patient, and so willing to wait; calm, and so ready to act. True wisdom is the most unobtrusive gift; for having, as it were, taken the measure of boisterous vehemence and impulse, its own qualities are the very reverse, being "peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated." The gift of wisdom is the gift of that power that will make us have a right judgment in all things. It does not imply brilliant attainments or showy talents, for with "the lowly is wisdom;" but it is "profitable," the wise man says, "to direct us in the way of life." (Eccles. viii. 12; Prov. viii. 35.) While an apostle prays for it in its highest form for his people in these words, "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of your high calling." (Col. i. 9, 10.)

"The spirit of counsel and ghostly strength." In these words the Church asks for you that the Holy Spirit may so guide your spirit, that, with David, you may be able to say, "I bless the Lord who hath given me counsel." (Ps. xvi. 7.) "Counsel" so that you may know the right way to walk in, the right thing to do, and then "ghostly strength," or steadfastness and courage, sufficient to follow the way, or to do the thing, you have been shown to be

right. "Might" is the word used in the original passage in Isaiah, but both expressions imply nearly the same thing. St. Paul unites them when he prays for his converts, that they may be "strengthened with all might," and when he exhorts them "to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." In asking for the "spirit of ghostly strength," the Church is asking that you may be able to "quit you like men, and be strong." It is that strength of the spirit of which we have before spoken that shall make you brave, and true to your colours, in difficulty and danger; which shall enable you to "witness a good confession;" which shall make you independent of the condemnation of men; and which shall so raise you above outward circumstances, that when the time comes for the "outward man" to perish, the "inward man" may still be renewed "in the power of his might day by day."

"The spirit of knowledge and true godliness." The Church here prays, first, for you to have the knowledge of God as an intellectual gift, and a true acquaintance with divine things by the powers of the understanding, and then for such a heartfelt love of them as shall bring you into a state of "true godliness." In asking for "the spirit of knowledge" for you, she asks that you may know God and all His works; she opens to you the almost boundless fields of science as the revelations of God's works; and the researches of literature as the history of His government of the world, as well as that more direct revelation of Himself and divine truth made to you in His word; referring not, indeed, to that deep, personal knowledge of which our Lord speaks when He says, "This is life eternal to know Thee," but rather to a general acquaintance with the truths

of God's teaching, and with His character as declared to us in His word. Neither do the words exclude, as we have seen in speaking of wisdom, that more practical knowledge which so concerns the affairs and well-being of our daily life, as we may see by a reference to those passages before quoted in Exodus. To this is added the spirit in which all knowledge should be sought, and to which it should tend, even "true godliness." Reverence, honesty, and truthfulness must be the spirit of all search after knowledge in higher matters; dependence, thankfulness, and contentment, in lower. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build," is true of mental as well as material work, for He "teacheth man knowledge." (Ps. xciv. 10.) And the things that are "hid from the wise and prudent," in their own eyes, God will "reveal to babes,"—to those who are of a childlike and teachable spirit. "And fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of Thy holy fear, now and ever." This is the conclusion of the collect, gathering up all its petitions into one that seems to embrace them all; asking for you that "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom,"¹ which will give you "strong confidence,"² which is "the fountain of life;" asking in fact that you may walk as the early Christians walked, "in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost,"³ all the days of your life. "Thy holy fear" are the words—a child's loving fear arising from reverence, not a slave's fear, the result of terror.

After this collect, with its large requests, has been offered up, we come to the act of Confirmation itself:—

¹ Ps. iii. 10.

² Prov. xv. 26, 27.

³ Acts ix. 31.

"Then, all of them in order, kneeling before the Bishop, he shall lay his hand upon the head of every one severally, saying,

"Defend, O Lord, this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come into Thy everlasting kingdom. Amen."

The laying on of hands is the oldest form of blessing, and the especial sign and symbol of paternal blessing. So Isaac blessed Jacob, so Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, so Moses blessed Joshua. It is in the character of a Father in God that the Bishop lays his hands on each one kneeling before him. In Baptism, the Minister takes the infant into his arms, in token that he is then taken into God's family; in Confirmation, the Bishop lays his hand upon your head, in token that a Father's blessing is resting on you, as a witness that God is sealing you His child.

In the Confirmation Service of 1549, the sign of the cross was repeated, the Bishop first signing the cross on the forehead and laying his hand on the head of each candidate, saying, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and lay my hand upon thee, in the name of the Father," &c.¹ This was omitted in 1552, and our present benedictional prayer was inserted, "Defend, O Lord, this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace," &c.

What wonderful words of prayer and blessing are these to carry with you to your life's end! May they sink into your hearts, as they are said over you on your Confirmation morning. They are true and real words, the outward sign of a true

¹ Procter.

and real gift of an inward grace that shall abide with you for ever. How often may they come back to you with untold strength when temptation almost overcomes you, when doubt and despondency well-nigh overwhelm you. There are times in most lives,—surely there will be times in yours,—when you are, as it were, tried to the uttermost; when the temptation to evil seems beyond your power to resist, when to take and eat of the forbidden fruit and die, seems better to you than to refrain, and live: or, again, when you are tried with such an agony of sorrow that your heart is ready to “curse God” for the misery it cannot bear,—at such an hour may this prayer be answered—“Defend, O Lord, from all enemies, outward and inward, from the influence of evil men, from the assaults of the Devil, from the madness of passion, this Thy child, with Thy heavenly grace. Do Thou defend him, for he hardly cares to defend himself; may he not be tried beyond what he is able to bear; make him a way of escape. Defend him with Thy heavenly grace, for in no earthly armour can he pass unharmed through this fierce struggle, or come triumphant out of the hands of the enemy.”

Again, there will be hours when the simple assurance here given you of your relationship to God may bring to your tempest-tossed or wounded spirit a sense of indescribable peace. Times there will be when you need a fact to rest on, when you cannot reason, or even pray, when you want the assurance that God is your Father, and that you may turn to Him because you are already His. Then this benediction, with the solemn service that sealed you God's child, will give you the actual token you need; it will not throw you back on

your own feelings, which, changing as the changing sand, can give you no sure resting-place, but upon God as upon a rock that cannot be moved. While now, for the present time before you have experienced either much struggle or much sorrow, this blessing has its word of encouragement ;—it speaks to the weak and vacillating, of perseverance, as it prays, “that he may continue Thine for ever ;” to the ardent and hopeful, of continual progress “and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more ;” to the timid and faint-hearted, of the promised end, “until he come to Thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.”

At the beginning of the service you made the profession of your faith, in the acceptance of your baptismal vow, and now kneeling at God’s altar you are confirmed by His Spirit, and you go back to your place strengthened to do and to suffer in His service, no longer only signed with the cross of baptism, but sealed by the Spirit: “may you lead the rest of your life according to this beginning.”

The Service continues with the words, “The Lord be with you,” which is said when you have again taken your place in the congregation ; with its response, “And with Thy Spirit.” Then follows the Lord’s Prayer ; it was introduced into the Service in 1604, and it could never be more appropriately used, than as the first prayer which you repeat after being confirmed in the full privilege of your Father’s family. The opening words, “Our Father,” reminding you of the relationship in which you have been individually sealed, while the fact that you offer up all its petitions not for yourself alone, but for the world at large, reminds you that you are one of a family, that the great gifts now

sealed to you are not to separate you, but to unite you with Christ's body, the Church. You can hardly repeat this prayer at such a time without a hearty response to each petition as they bid you pray that His name, will, and kingdom, may be established, whose service you have just publicly accepted ; after it, stands the last collect belonging to this Service, and composed in 1549.

THE COLLECT.

“Almighty and ever-living God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto Thy Divine Majesty, We make our humble supplications unto Thee for these Thy servants, upon whom (after the example of Thy holy Apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them (by this sign) of Thy favour and gracious goodness towards them. Let Thy Fatherly hand ever be over them ; let Thy Holy Spirit ever be with them ; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of Thy Word, that in the end they may obtain everlasting life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.”

In this collect the Church asks God for the continuance and increase of the very gift she has just certified to you. It is not true of the gift of Confirmation any more than of the gift of Baptism, that it is made over to you as an inalienable possession ; it is yours as a blessing to be lived in, used, and increased, and, therefore, still to be sought and prayed for. In this very seeking and praying is the security that it shall be yours for ever ; for the danger is

that you should cease to care for it, not that God should cease to give it. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," and will never withdraw His gifts till you have withdrawn yourself from Him ; therefore, He encourages you with promises, and incitations, and exhortations, to be earnest in prayer in and for the Spirit, that you may not grow indifferent to it. "To him that hath shall more be given ;" to him who is not satisfied to remain stationary, but is ever "pressing forward to the prize of his high calling," shall yet fuller and fuller manifestations of the Spirit be given. Knowing this, the Church prays that you may be led on ever more and more in "knowledge and obedience," gathering up in those two words the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit, to the life everlasting.

The hand of the Bishop rested on you for a moment in token that a higher hand shall rest upon you for ever ; he has seen you once, and now you will each go on your way, and it may be see him no more ; he will know nothing of your future history, your troubles, sins, and sorrows ; he will not be able to guide or help you, so he prays, "Let Thy Fatherly hand ever be over them, let Thy Holy Spirit ever be with them." Thus have the Church's chief ministers prayed, generation after generation, to the Father, Son, and Spirit, "who liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end." Thus have the Spirit and the bride said, "Come." Thus have the ranks of the Church militant been filled up ; thus has the number of the Church triumphant been swelled. Not one of her long list of confessors and saints could have been triumphant in this struggle with sin and Satan, except they had "been kept by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us," and of whose presence with

each true member of the Church this ordinance is the seal and token.

The collect that follows, "O Almighty Lord," &c. is selected from the collects in the Communion service, as one in which all the assembled congregation are to join—the candidates that day received, the parents and friends who have gathered together to be present with them, the clergy who have prepared them, the Bishop who has confirmed them. All are members of the same family, all are fighting the same battle, all are needing the same help; in "heart and body," in inward feeling and in outward action, each and all need to be "directed, sanctified, and governed;" in "body and soul"—from bodily dangers and from spiritual foes—each and all need the same "most mighty protection," to preserve them "both here and ever," through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the Bishop shall bless them, saying thus,—

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be upon you, and remain with you for ever. Amen.

The blessing of God Almighty, the Unity in Trinity, is pronounced first, then separately and distinctly each Person of the Holy Trinity is mentioned; you have offered yourself to the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit, and now the blessing of each is asked for you. As you were received separately and distinctly in the name of each into Christ's Church in infancy, so in the strength and blessing of each are you now sent on your way. May you, then, rise from your knees once more with the purity of a little child, but also with the strength of a confirmed soldier, to take

your path through life, with that blessing on your head, till, in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, you join in the praise of those around the throne, saying, "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! which was, and is, and is to come."

VIII.

"My heart leaps up when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky ;
 So was it when my life began,
 So is it now I am a man,
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die !
 The child is father of the man,
 And I would wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety."

WORDSWORTH.

LIFE AFTER CONFIRMATION—FALSE INDEPENDENCE, ITS EVIL RESULTS—A LIFE'S CHOICE—A LIFE'S RULE—TO LIVE SOBERLY, AS REGARDS OURSELVES; TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY, AS REGARDS OTHERS—TO LIVE GODLY—THE SOURCE OF THIS LIFE—THE MEANS OF ITS SUSTENANCE—PRAYER—THE WORD—THE HOLY COMMUNION—CONCLUSION.

THE Confirmation-day has come and gone; its vows have been made, its great gift has been solemnly sealed to you, and now you are to go on your way with that "Fatherly hand ever over you, with that Holy Spirit ever with you," to begin the battle of life in earnest. The lines of Wordsworth that headed the last chapter are true, and "ere the sun goes down your childhood sets." The fact of your being of an age to be confirmed is a proof that you have come, as the Church words it,

to "years of discretion;" and points to that time in your life when you are passing from school to an introduction into society in the higher ranks of life, or from school to college life; or, again, to the actual work for daily bread in the case of others. The training and restraining, moulding and guiding, of early life is over. If a parent's direct work has not been done by this time, it is very rarely that it can be done after. Your parents brought you to the Baptismal font and dedicated you to God, and there you were given back to their arms (as Moses was given back to Miriam) to educate for Him; now the time has come when they have, more or less, done this work. Most important is it that such habits of loving obedience and reverence for them should have been formed, that you turn to them for guidance, and direction, and help. But if this early training has not been done, it is generally too late to supply it now. As life goes on God takes your education into His own hands—by His Spirit He will lead you day by day into all truth—and, through the joys and sorrows, the duties and discipline of life, conform you to His holy will: or if you will not listen to this teaching, then His training often comes through the deep and bitter trials and disappointment that attend your self-chosen ways, to lead you back at last to Him.

It is, therefore, of your life after Confirmation, and the way in which your Confirmation vows affect it, I would now speak.

What are the words with which it meets you? "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." The state of pupilage is passed, the restraints of direct home government are over, and what is the temptation that is most likely to beset you? Is it too much to say that it is just the same temptation

that beset your first parents in Eden, though varying in its form according to the circumstances of your life? Is not the scene beneath the tree of knowledge of good and evil repeated in most of our lives? "Hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" Are you really to be restricted and restrained in this way? Are you not able to judge for yourselves? Cannot you be independent and do as you like? These are the questions with which the old serpent tempts most of us at first starting in life.

If you consider the matter, I think you will all confess that this is your experience. To boys who go out to work the temptation comes roughly enough; and I would ask them if it does not find expression in the words, "I get my own bread now, and I don't see why I may not do as I like; I am my own master now." Perhaps the temptation comes most strongly to such of you as are lodging at home, if its ways and regulations happen to go counter to your fancies: it requires, then, God's help for you really to be your own master (though in a very different sense from that in which you have used the words), and keep angry feeling, defiant words, and even actions, down; yet we know that it may be done, for how often in the same home where such defiance of conduct is shown, is there, perhaps, an elder brother, the mainstay of the family, of whom the mother says with pride, "He never gave me a saucy word in his life!" To girls, also, the same circumstances bring the same temptation. Many of you work at dressmaking, &c., or serve in shops, perhaps in some town at a distance from your home, and thus, as regards the companionships you form, the amusements you go to, the use you make of your money and your time,

you are left at this early age to your own "discretion." Thank God, this early independence has often the effect of giving a degree of early thoughtfulness, and steadfastness, and a firmness of character, that, perhaps, no other circumstances would have produced. But you will, I think, confess that the temptation of this life is to make you also think that you have a right to do as you like. "I work hard for my money; I may do as I like with it." "I am always punctual at my work; I shall do as I like afterwards." Are not these the words that are very often the honest expression of your feeling? While in the work-room the same mistaken rule prevails. Is it not your temptation there to think that you may talk as you like, no matter how idle, how foolish, and too often how improper, the conversation may be, provided it does not hinder the work? Even if you are at home there is but little check given to this feeling; for how frequently one hears a mother say, "It's no use my talking; she will do as she likes, and she must go her own way." Partly, then, from the circumstances of your life, and from the influences around you, the danger is great that you will think that you are no longer accountable to any one, except for the actual work for which you are paid, and that you may take, as regards your own personal conduct, the principle that you are to do as you like.

In the higher ranks of life there is the same evil. To those of you who pass from the school-room into the world, and in the first flush of youth are taking your place in society, this temptation, though in a subtler form, meets you. How often are the first years of freedom from the restraints of school-room routine marked by a time of selfish gratification in the pursuit of pleasure, of careless indifference

as regards the wishes, and comfort, and happiness of those around, that proves that the same self-willed principle is at work, and that "I have a right now to do as I like" is taken as an equivalent for coming "to years of discretion!" Your temptation is very great in first launching into life to set your sails to the wind, and let the gale and tide carry you whither they will; to give yourself up to every pleasurable excitement, taking no reckoning, and heeding no counsel; to think that you have but your own amusement to consult in the friendships you make or drop, in the pursuits you follow, or in the disposal of your time.

To boys also, in this rank, as they first grow up, how completely is the old story in the garden of Eden repeated! Will not such of you as are passing out of boyhood confess, that before you, too, stands the tree of knowledge of good and evil—to you, too, comes the Tempter's voice, from without or from within, "Take and eat"? To you, too, the words "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," sound but an idle tale. "Ye shall not surely die," the Tempter goes on; "hundreds daily take and eat; what is to hinder you? Are you not old enough to judge for yourself, and to do as you like? Who is lord over you?"

Just at this point of your life, when, because you are growing out of the child and putting away childish things, the temptation to you all is to think that you have now a right to do as you like, the question of your Confirmation morning meets you. Your Heavenly Father loves you each and all too well to leave you thus to yourselves; He meets you at this critical moment of your life with the words, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." You are thinking that there is nothing so pleasant as

doing as you like,—being accountable to no one, being free from home and school restraint, free to please yourself: God is telling you that there is nothing so miserable, nay, rather, that there is nothing so impossible. Observe that the words are, “Choose you whom you will serve.” Serve some one you must; for doing as you like will too soon end in doing as Satan likes. The kind of independence that you are tempted to covet you will not be able to keep; it is only for a short time that any man can keep his house empty, swept and garnished; and if he will not admit its lawful Master, the Evil One will enter in and take possession, and make the man his slave. I would put it to you very seriously, to say if you have not, some of you, known this to be the case. Are there none of those who attended at the same school with you, a little older than yourself, who have been led into sin, and misery, and ruin, just by doing as they liked?—doing as they liked as regards the acquaintances they made, the places of amusement they attended, the hours they kept? I fear you must know some such, the full evil and misery you cannot know; but when we see how easily, in one rank of society, self-willed independence becomes insolent indifference to all warning and counsel, and disregard of all restraint, and then open sin, we ought to learn the extreme danger, in every rank, of this evil, though its results are not so visible. It is not surprising that just going your own way, and letting this determined spirit of wilful independence rule you, should in some cases end so fatally, and in all lead you farther and farther from God, when we remember that it was this very spirit that cast the angels out of heaven and our first parents out of paradise. “I shall do as I like” seems to contain the spirit of all sin, for “sin is

selfishness ;" it is choosing to act and to live for self, independent of God, instead of living to Him and in Him.

Confirmation, then, distinctly brings before you the choice of your life's master ; not, however, for the first time, for, as we have seen, all the Church's teaching in the Catechism has been preparing you for this choice—preparing you to take, of your own free will, the vow that was made for you at your Baptism. But not only has the Church been preparing you, but God has likewise. The Israelites themselves could not answer with greater truth than you can, "He has preserved us in all our ways wherein we went." He has been leading you all day by day to the choice of your Confirmation morning. With regard to this very love of independence that has been at work in you long before the time comes for its full development, has not God already taught you many lessons? Have you found it, so far as you have yet been able to try it, such a really pleasant thing to take "I shall do as I like" for your rule? For a little time it may be, yet generally not half so satisfactory as you expected ; and before long a restless feeling overtakes you, that you had better have done something else. The pleasure, for instance, that you have insisted on having may appear successful so far as the thing itself is concerned, but you do not enter into the enjoyment vividly ; in your heart you are inclined to doubt if it was worth doing, and find it hard to keep up to the mark. By each such feeling God would have you learn that everything taken apart from Him, taken simply from a determination to please yourself, must be unsatisfactory. Again, by the unhappiness you feel after giving way to unkind thoughts and tempers, by the misery to yourself

of a rebellious, perverse, stubborn state of heart, and by the happiness of returning to a loving, kind, and submissive spirit, God has been teaching you to choose His loving service, which is perfect freedom.

And now that the choice has been made, the vow of your Baptism has been taken, in what way is it to affect your future life? There has been an object lately in your life, preparing you for this day; but now that is over, and the classes meet no more, and the subject put aside, there is a danger of a reaction taking place, if you do not see how all that you have been learning is to be used now. What are you, I would ask, going to do with your religion? Is it to be laid aside, to be called for again on a bed of sickness, or is it to be with you in daily life? and if so, how is it to influence that? What, in fact, is your life after Confirmation to be? St. Paul shall answer the question: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

I think no words could more truly and exactly bring before you your present state, or your life as it should be after Confirmation. "The grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ," and which "bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men;" hath been covenanted to you in Baptism, and sealed to you in Confirmation; and further, you have denied "ungodliness and worldly lusts," in renouncing the world, the flesh, and the Devil. This is your present state; and now follows the rule of your future life, to walk—

I. As regards yourself—soberly, having renounced the flesh;

2. As regards others—righteously, having renounced the world ;

3. As regards God—godly, having renounced the Devil.

1. As regards yourself—soberly, having renounced the flesh.

These three heads are but three aspects of the same life. Our whole Church teaching has been to show us how completely we shall break down in attempting to separate our spiritual from our outward life, or our outward from our spiritual life. None of you who have entered into the meaning of the Catechism can for a moment suppose that the ordinary moral duties of life are of less importance in God's sight than is the state of your heart and feelings. You have been taught there that salvation is deliverance in Christ from the power of sin and Satan—that to be able to renounce the world, the flesh, and the Devil ; to accept Christ as your Deliverer and Redeemer, God as your Father, the Spirit as your guide, and the righteous law of God as your life, is in itself salvation.

You cannot divide your life, giving only a part to God, and giving the other part to Satan ; Christ has redeemed not a part but the whole ; your spirit, soul, and body He claims as ransomed by His death from the power of sin, death, and Satan. The “deeds of the body,” the acts of your daily life, must therefore be as important to Him as the feelings of your heart and the aspirations of your spirit, though you may think one higher than the other. Can we for a moment suppose that the loftiest words of praise, or the most rapt meditation of heart are of any value in God's sight if the common words of daily life, of neighbour to neighbour, are false, insincere, and uncharitable, or the

common feelings of daily life are unkind, inconsistent, and selfish? "As sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal," in God's hearing, is the most rapturous burst of praise in honour of His works and ways from the lips of one who is not striving to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." A worthless sentiment must all religious feeling be in His sight, if it does not pass into action.

You are taught, then, that the first mark of your Christian life—of the life you are to lead under the influence of God the Holy Spirit—should be that of "soberness." No word could more directly express your right state. It is quite true that as you grow up you are gradually set free from the direct superintendence of early life, that in the true and real sense you are to be in course of time independent; but you can only be so by becoming more strictly dependent on God. You are to be no longer surrounded with rules and regulations. Why? Not surely that you may be left to yourself, but that you may be given principles on which to act, so that you shall not need rules for each detail of your life, but have that which shall be the foundation of your life itself. Your obedience now is to be the intelligent obedience of one who has freely accepted God's service as his highest good—the hearty submission of one who has promised to be faithful unto death in his Master's cause.

To live "soberly." First, as regards our passions. We are no longer to be in any way the slave of our own lusts. A man overcome by drink is a slave to one passion, overcome by avarice is a slave to another passion, overcome by anger is a slave to another passion. These men can be, neither in the false sense any more than in the true sense, independent. Drunkenness holds up before our eyes,

plainly and visibly, the course of all sin. We see its fatal history in this case, though we often fail to recognize it in other cases. The gratification of this passion at first gives a man pleasure, then it overcomes him, rules him more and more, till at last the passion itself has absolute mastery, and then it destroys him. In more spiritual sins, such as pride, avarice, malice, or ambition, the process is longer and more secret, but once allowed to hold their way the result is the same. That idol of false independence that we have set up vanishes; we may begin by gratifying a passion, because we like it, we shall end by gratifying it because it forces us to do so—doing it and hating it and hating yourself for doing it. It is not, however, often that we fall beneath the bondage of one master passion—the circumstances of our life, and even our own want of purpose forbid it where it is not a mere animal indulgence; more frequently we are tempted to fall beneath the power of each in turn as they are presented to us, and it is therefore as much against this lax and careless way of living that the word “soberly” is directed, as against the exclusive indulgence of any one passion. We feel that a man ceases to be sober the moment any desire or passion has the upper hand with him, no matter what it is; for the time he has lost his balance, lost his self-control, and has become the sport of the passion he has indulged. When therefore, as regards ourselves, we are bidden to live “soberly,” it is true independence, instead of false independence, that is set before us. For “now, being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

“If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free

indeed." As we go on in life, we shall find how very difficult it is to be really free. We may be free in this or that particular; we may be struggling more and more so to conquer every evil or idle habit as to be free in devoting our energies to God's service, we may be struggling more and more to have our wills made like God's will, yet it is only one here and there who is really able to follow the Apostle's words, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." To be free, because Christ hath made us free, because in Him we have all things, because "we have learned, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content," because we have learned to take outward prosperity, if it comes, as God's gift, and failure, if it comes, also as God's gift, to be made up a hundred-fold by Him in our inner life—to be free, because we have learned to have no hankering after so much of people's good opinion as shall make us stand well with our fellows, knowing that "to his own master a man standeth or falleth;" this is indeed independence. This cannot be attained except through much of life's discipline and God's training, in many ways; it can only be attained in so far as we are depending on Him and not on ourselves, "walking by faith, and not by sight."

The first step towards this freedom must be made by walking "soberly," by overcoming habits that would tyrannize over us—sloth, vanity, extravagance, love of ease, love of ruling, one or other of these generally besets us as we start in life. A habit of real independence is so unlike its counterfeit, that it requires a good deal of "not doing as we like" to acquire even its first principles. Yet there

is nothing dispiriting in this idea : it is a struggle certainly, but what is there that you really value for which you have not struggled? And this struggle brings its own reward. The very act of getting the better of an evil habit brings a sense of real enjoyment, and sets you free to enter with hearty spirit into the life around.

To live "soberly" refers, secondly, to our pleasures and pursuits. There is nothing morose in the word "soberly"; it does not cut you off from one honest enjoyment; indeed, it would lose its meaning if you shut yourself off from life, and its society and pleasures. It does not tell you *not* to enjoy yourself, but *how* to enjoy yourself. It is very true that "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and though we seem often to find it hard to believe it, God's laws are the best laws, for the guidance even of this our earthly life. See how true this is with regard to our pleasures—how completely does an inordinate use of pleasure defeat its own object, and deprive us of its enjoyment. It is lamentable how soon the gratification of pleasure wears out, even to the young—how early they become indifferent to it—not because they have found higher resources, but because they have taken it so extravagantly that it has palled upon them. We exhaust our power of enjoyment because we draw upon it unfairly, and we draw upon it unfairly because we do not believe that it comes from God. We think that it belongs to ourselves, and therefore that we are responsible to no one for its use; and as we have seen with regard to our other gifts, so with this—if we believe it comes from ourselves, we shall use it to ourselves; if we believe it comes from the Evil One, we shall use it to the Evil One; and if we believe

it comes from God, we shall use it to God. God means pleasure to be a recreation to us, to supply such a healthy stimulant to our powers, mental and bodily, as shall renew or recreate them, and refit us for our work. If we abuse this gift of pleasure, so that either from its kind or quantity it leaves us listless, weary, and vacant; or if we have no work in life for which to be renewed, but our amusement is our whole employment, it will cease after a little while to have the power of giving us any real gratification. God teaches us how to use our recreations by His laws for the natural world. He does not bid the flowers to smile on us all the year round, He does not feast our eyes always with the full luxuriance of summer. He does not bid all birds to sing, or all plants to give sweet scent; He does not allow our pleasure in these things to be exhausted; neither does He mean us so to use the recreations of life as to exhaust their power of pleasing. Our only safeguard against this seems to be to receive them as His gifts, and therefore as blessings to be used unselfishly, wisely, and moderately—"soberly," in fact.

The word soberness has, however, been so often used as the equivalent for dulness, that, perhaps, you may think that to take your pleasures "soberly" is to fulfil Froissart's description of our nation in his day, that "they took their pleasures sadly." This would, indeed, be a mistake. We have seen that soberness means not to be overpowered, not to be enslaved by any desire or passion; in using it, therefore, with regard to pleasure, it means simply that you are not to be so overpowered or enslaved by the desire of it, that you can no longer judge what is good for you,—what is right in kind,

or wise in measure. It does not mean that your pleasures are to be dull, or that there is anything in your Christian profession to hinder your having real, hearty, downright amusement. Religion does not consist in prohibition; God gave the strong sense of animal life to the young and healthy, and He gave the light joyous spirits to the bright and cheerful, meaning both to have full scope and hearty enjoyment. "God has made you young and merry, enjoy your dance and thank Him for it," says a recent writer; and this gives you the best assurance that your pleasures are right, moderate, and wholesome for you, namely, that you can accept them as His gifts and thank Him for them. To young girls in the working classes the subject is more difficult, from the fact that they are deprived of the safeguards and protection thrown around those in the upper ranks, and if they go to amusements at all, often go alone, or with only companions of their own age. A double amount of carefulness is required if you are in these circumstances, especially in the acquaintances which you make; but you can have no higher principle on which to act, and no greater security from evil, than that which comes from accepting your pleasures as God's gift and enjoying them in His presence. I am, of course, not speaking here of those cheap places of amusement for dancing, &c., which I know you feel among yourselves quite out of the question for you, not only because incompatible with the vows of your Baptism, but with your own good character and self-respect. In all classes your parents' wishes should be your guide, for things not wrong in themselves become wrong if done in opposition to them; but beyond this do not seek for definite rules; do not suppose that any one can

draw a line for you, and tell you that such a set of amusements are safe, and such unsafe, for no one can, or has a right to do so. What is safe and well under some circumstances and to some characters, is not to others. We all shrink in everything so much from responsibility, that we are tempted to prefer exact rules, to the care of watching our daily life, and guarding against that which tends to a vain, and frivolous, and self-indulgent spirit in whatever form it comes. True independence is not a thing that many of us really love; we vibrate between license and bondage. We like the license of doing just as we like; but if we give up this we like a set rule. We can make up our minds to give up a certain prescribed set of pleasures, but we shrink from the responsibility of using them "soberly," of "using and not abusing them." Yet this is God's way of educating us in His service, and strengthening us in true liberty. No such artificial rules are given by the Apostles. Throughout the Epistles it is right and wrong, good and evil, purity and sin, that are brought before us as the great subject of our choice. This you will see by referring to Rom. xiii. 13; Gal. v. 21; Eph. v. 4, 8; 2 Tim. ii. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12; and iv. 3, 4; 1 John ii. 15, 16. In all these passages it is particular sins, not particular amusements, that the Apostles denounce. It is invariably undoubted evil against which they warn us; though often such evil as the abuse of pleasure and amusement is likely to produce—rioting, drunkenness, evil-speaking, quarrelling, worldliness, &c. Just as St. Paul in the fourteenth of Romans left it to the conscience of each man to say what days he should keep holy, what meats he should eat, what heathen feasts he should attend, forbidding any one to judge him, for "to his own

master he standeth or falleth ;” so is it left to our consciences to decide what amusements lead us into sin, and what are really true recreation to us. Having honestly done this, join in them happily and heartily, with no secret feeling in your mind that God does not rejoice to see you bright and happy—that He grudges His children the enjoyment of the very light-heartedness He has given them, but rather with the feeling that you will do nothing unworthy of the love that has bestowed them upon you.

But the word “soberly” refers to our pursuits and work as well as to our pleasures. Here, too, we pay the same penalty if we break God’s law and use them inordinately, for they likewise will fail us. How frequently our interest in a pursuit comes to an end, just because we have put no restraint upon ourselves in its first indulgence ; God meant its enjoyment to have spread over our life, we have chosen quickly to exhaust it, and must not complain at the result. As with our pursuits, so with our work. How few can really throw their heart into their work as they should, and yet remember that it is to be done “soberly.” In working for a fortune, in working for a reputation, how rarely does a man work soberly, and how rarely does he heartily enjoy the fruit of his labours. He has not believed that his work in life was work for God at all, he has looked on it simply as work for himself or his family ; God’s laws with regard to it have not been even recognized by him, and so he has worked recklessly, overtaxing his brain and strength, exhausting them both before their time.

It seems often equally difficult, even in religious work, to do it earnestly, warmly, and energetically, and yet “soberly” ; but it is not work for God if it

be not done thus. It may be work for others, it may be work that will bring good to others and praise to ourselves, but it is not work for God if it is not done after His fashion. Like everything else that we do recklessly, our interest in it will wear out. We may go on with it to the end of our lives doing it hardly and mechanically, but in our heart of hearts we shall confess that its living interest is gone. Our flagging zeal may be spurred by party influences and transient excitement, but the real spirit is exhausted;—to work thoroughly and perseveringly we must work “soberly.” We must not be so overpowered with the desire of it, that we are led to suppose that if we do not do it, God has no one else to do it; or that we cannot give it up willingly, if God sees fit, into other hands. Really to work for God we must work in His order, believing that the thing of first importance is what we *are*, rather than what we *do*; believing, also, that He claims our whole life, not one part more than another, and that if we will not take our direct religious work “soberly,” it must result in our other work in life being left undone. Really to work for God, we must remember that the little charities of life, the kindly sympathy with the joys and sorrows of others, the kindly help in the pleasures and difficulties of children and the cheerful entertainment of the home circle, are all parts of the life we hold at His hands, and must not suffer by our devotion to another portion of our duty. As in our pleasures, so in our work, we often feel too little of the real presence of God with us to do it heartily to Him, “with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.”

And why is it that we are to live “soberly”? Why is it that we are not to be enslaved by any

passion or desire? Surely it is that, "laying aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us," we may "run with patience the race that is set before us." We lay aside every weight that sin would lay upon us, that we may run freely; we lay aside all extravagance, even in our religious duties, that we may run not by fits and starts, but with patience and perseverance. We have not entered on the race for to-day or to-morrow, but for our whole life; and if we do not enter on it "soberly," our energies are likely to flag and our zeal to falter long before we have come to the end.

2. As regards others, righteously—having renounced the world.

Our Confirmation vow pledges us to live "soberly" as regards ourselves, our own desires, pleasures, and pursuits—to be, in fact, "temperate in all things;" while it also pledges us to live "righteously" as regards our conduct to others. The definition of righteous is "just," "true," "upright." The words, "the just" and "the righteous," may be used indifferently, and are so in the Bible. To live "righteously," then, is to live uprightly, not only in respect of honesty, but in respect of all our social relations. We have renounced the kingdom which Satan has set up in the world, which is based on falsehood, we have accepted our position in the kingdom of Christ, which is based on truth; we are therefore bound to strive more and more to live in accordance with its principle. We are to strive to be true and just and upright in our thoughts, words, and acts, to be "righteous" in our daily life—

- (1) As regards Society at large.
- (2) As regards our Friends.
- (3) As regards our Family.

(1) As regards Society at large.—We cannot walk righteously in the most ordinary acceptation of the word, if we are not seeking “to be true and just in all our dealings, to keep our heart from malice and hatred, and our tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering.” We may here recognize with thankfulness that the struggle of righteousness against evil, of the kingdom of God against Satan, is tending towards the triumph of right. We are often tempted to be in despair of the victory of good over evil, but at all events, after many thousand years of struggle, Satan has not yet made the world a den of thieves. Crying injustice, dishonesty, lying, slander, and violence exist in the world, but still the Spirit of God has prevailed over the Spirit of Evil, and it is no longer in our day as in the old times, when “the earth was filled with violence,” and “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth,” so that nothing but the waters of the deluge could purify it.

The first way in which, then, we are to walk “righteously” is in daily striving to fulfil the common duties of neighbour to neighbour, which were brought before us in the Second Table of the Law—to be just in our dealings with those who employ us, or with those whom we employ; just in the work that we do, or in the wages that we pay, as the case may be; honest in all those ordinary transactions of trade and life of which we have spoken before. When we refuse to do this, when idleness or avarice, dishonesty or passion, successfully tempt us to break those commandments, we are doing Satan’s bidding, living according to the laws of his kingdom, and denying the Lord that hath redeemed us. We, the children of God, become, by that act, the children of Satan; and it is

only by God's Spirit bringing us to ourselves that we can arise and go to our Father.

But living "righteously" with regard to others means also admitting the just claims of our neighbours, whether poor or rich. It is to confess that the poor and needy, the suffering and sorrowing, have a right to our assistance. We cannot be true members of God's family, and deny the claims of any, as far as we can help them. If we are one with Christ, we must feel one with them; our help will be given not as something extraordinary, but as the ordinary fulfilment of a family duty, by each in his own sphere, and according to his circumstances in life. We shall not seek for anything great to do, or any prominent place to occupy, remembering that our Master was content to work chiefly in Galilee, the roughest and least important part of the land, and was rarely seen at Jerusalem; the work that lies nearest to our hand to be done, will be the work that we shall be content to do. If you accept work for others, whether teaching or visiting, or whatever it be, as your natural family work, because you are God's child, it will fall into its right place. The neighbours about your own door, if you are working for your daily bread, will be the objects of your kindly interest. A sick child amused after you come home from work, or an orphan friend asked to share a day's employment; a class taken in the Sunday-School; or help given to a new-comer in preparing for a Bible lesson, if you are yourself a member of a class, will be accepted by you as work for Christ. Or, again, the people in your own village, the schools of your own place, will, in ordinary cases, fully supply those of you in a higher rank with sufficient work on first beginning life. If from circumstances,

as years go on, you have strength and time to devote in an especial manner to others, you will rejoice to do so ; but if you have not, you will accept other and different duties as still family work given by the same Father, and to be done equally for Him. If once you accept your whole life from God, work to support a family, or work as a wife and mother to bring up a family with all its cares and anxieties, will not come to you in any way as less the work that He has given you to do for Him, than would, under other circumstances, missionary labours in distant lands, or nursing in the hospitals of our own, remembering that—

“God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

But the word “righteously” extends to our ordinary intercourse with others in society. To be just, and upright, and true in our social dealings is by no means easy in any rank of life. To know and value people for their position, to seek their acquaintance from purely selfish and worldly motives, is a temptation to all, and is in direct opposition to acting “righteously.” The temptation to speak false words, to live false lives, to make false professions as regards others, is confined to no particular class. It is, however, more easy to live righteously, that is, justly and uprightly as regards those below us, than as regards our equals. Strange to say, we often consider the one more in the light of a religious duty than the other, sometimes even making the claims of the one an excuse for neglecting the claims of the other. The motive to resist this temptation is to be found in the family claim put forth by the great Father of the family, for all His children to live righteously as regards each other. Further,

in confessing this duty as a family claim, we shall at once feel that it is not only as people give us pleasure, amuse us, profit us, or suit us, that we are bound to consider them, but that beyond this they have a right to kindly help and social friendliness at our hands as members of the same family. God intends that there should be a bond not always, perhaps, visible, but still existing throughout His whole Church on earth, and when the time and occasion offer that it should be seen. Great calamities, whether in a district or in a country, reveal this bond—its links are too often broken, yet sufficient are left even now to prove that we do acknowledge the family claim of our fellow-creatures, and of those who are made in God's image like ourselves. We only require an adequate cause to make us confess, at least for a time, that we are brethren. What it requires great calamities to do for the world at large, our Confirmation should do for us individually, and we should enter society with a feeling that all whom we come across have, not for their own sake simply, but for their family's sake, a claim on our kindness and courtesy. No greater help to this more genial feeling as regards others is to be found, than to be ready to see the Master's image reflected often in those we least expect. It is true in a sense now, that we may entertain angels unawares; that those whom we have from a superficial knowledge set aside as deficient in all we most value, may stand revealed in quite another light on the day when "the first shall be last, and the last first." How much of real kindness, how much of the love without which the highest gifts are nothing worth, is exercised in many ordinary lives of which we think lightly. Some there are, from the circumstances of their position, or their

own disposition, who have never taken part in what is considered religious work, but yet have found opportunities for kind acts and labours of love in their own circle,—nursing in sickness, helping in sorrow, giving friendly aid in many ways—their hearts and houses always open to the claims of kindness and friendship, which, though it may bring no particular credit in our eyes or in their own, may be found to have been accepted by the Judge, when they will ask in surprise, “Lord, when saw we Thee hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? or sick, and came unto Thee?”

(2) With regard to Friends.—That nearer circle which friends and relations form around us, is included in the law of our Confirmation vow. To look upon friendship as a sacred thing, neither to be lightly professed nor lightly violated, surely comes under the head of living “righteously” as regards others. We have no right by our profession to lead others to expect from us in the way of friendship what we do not mean to fulfil, and on the other hand, we have no right to be exacting and jealous. It is not just to expect from our friends thought and attention for ourselves, as though we were the only people in the world for whom they had to care. It is not right to allow slight causes of annoyance and discomfort to increase till they separate us, with no hearty effort to prevent it. We have done actual harm and wrong if we have led another to love and trust us, and then have allowed slight misunderstandings to end in alienation when, perhaps, a few words of explanation and conciliation would have prevented it. How much pain might be saved, how much real injury to a person’s own character spared, if we

fully recognized the force of our Confirmation vow in this particular? To be true, just, and upright in our everyday friendships, is a very great part of living righteously as regards others. We should check that habit of repeating from one to the other the careless words spoken about the absent, which appear so different when separated from what went before and what followed, so that what was merely heedless becomes often in the repetition actually unkind; we should set a watch over these very words in the first instance; we should force ourselves to look at the conduct of others to us not only from our point of view, but from theirs; and we should do so as much as a matter of duty as visiting the poor or teaching at schools, if once we strove to live righteously as regards our companions.

Again, with regard to influence, how very rarely is this gift used "righteously," even when the person is anxious to use it for good. The miserable cases of using it wilfully to lead others into evil are so obviously at variance with all right feeling, so distinctly doing Satan's work, that I need not speak of them here. It is the misuse of the gift when intending to use it well of which I would speak.

I believe in some cases when you have a strong desire to influence others, to awaken a higher life in those that you come in contact with, or in other ways to influence them for good, this desire is but the expression of the inward power. In such a case it is a gift not to be cast aside, but to be most carefully, and prayerfully, and humbly used. As with regard to pleasure, so with regard to influence; it would be easier to decide from its frequent abuse that it was altogether wrong, and ought to be struggled against and given up, but it seems more right

to look on it as a talent for which you must give account, and which, therefore, you must use wisely and watchfully. To use it "righteously," that is, justly and uprightly, you must accept it as a responsibility, not as a power; you must never use it for yourself. The moment that your influence over another is used to bring that other to depend on you, to rest in you, or to look to you, you are using it unrighteously. The moment self steps in, sin steps in. No one has a right to make himself necessary to another; no one has a right to put himself between a human soul and God; therefore, the only "righteous" use of influence is that which is helping another to do without it. If you have used it, so as to make another dependent on you, on your strength and help, what is to become of him if you are from circumstances removed to a distance? You have broken down a wall of reserve which is in itself a safeguard against evil, and which cannot easily be built up again, and have left the person open to the next power, good or bad, that comes near him, instead of having strengthened him not to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine," and every passing influence: but to have a right judgment in all things.

Very often, however, this desire of influence is simply a desire for self-gratification, its love but another form of the love of admiration. A dangerous form indeed, for, instead of being watched against as a fault, as we should in the last case, it is rather cherished and cultivated as a virtue. The pleasant delusion that we are trying to do good, frequently blinding us to the fact that we are really seeking to gratify our own vanity and importance. Besides, that this is indeed walking unrighteously as regards our intercourse with others, it makes us untrue to

ourselves, for we are very likely to set up a standard for ourselves, which we try to live up to, act a character in fact, and thus cast out all reality and truth from our daily life. In such a case the sooner we give up all thoughts of influencing others, and set about some real and practical work, the better. One true test for us to use on this subject is to see if it be so simply another person's good we desire, and not our own gratification, that we are heartily ready to give up the work to some one else, if he can do it better. After all, we must confess that the greatest and most lasting good is generally done by the unconscious influence of a thoroughly true, genuine, loving life, without any seeking to act directly on others. Our Master's whole example is against seeking for direct influence. It was offered to Him again and again, and He rejected it; He invariably turned away from those great openings of personal influence that would have seemed such an evident call to us; for when the Samaritans besought Him that He would tarry with them, He abode there but two days; when the man out of whom He had cast the devils besought Him to let him be with Him, He sent him to his own people; when He cleansed the leper He sent him to the priest to purify; when one came, saying, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," He only answered "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

(3) As regards our Family—the same rule that applies to our intercourse with the outward circle of general society, draws around the inner circle of home life. It is sometimes the rule least applied to it, for while we may be often loving and affectionate, we are not always "just"; honestly considering the

rights and claims of others ; righteous in what we expect from them, and give to them. Our affection must be not only a sentiment, but a principle, if we would walk righteously in our family life ; and we must remember that the laws which apply to all other intercourse should apply doubly to our home intercourse. If courtesy and kindness may be claimed from us by all men, as members of Christ's redeemed family on earth, how must this be increased by the added claim of natural family life, which God has so stamped with a sacred character that He has made it the mode of expressing our life in Him, revealing Himself as a Father and speaking of us as children.

Every outer work we undertake, every interest in schools or people to which we give ourselves, is an actual pledge for our doing our home work heartily and well. In home life more than in any other it is unconscious influence that is of value. By which I mean the influence obtained by one member of the family over the others, to raise their tone, simply by the daily example of kindness, truthfulness, and unselfishness. I am quite sure that direct influence among members of a large family always ends in failure. Brothers and sisters are brought into such close contact that though for a little time one earnest and energetic mind, *seeking* to influence the others for good, may appear to do so with advantage, it is very soon found to be a bondage that will not be endured. It generally becomes a love of ruling on one side, and always becomes a vexation on the other. Help may be given, and ought to be given, especially by the older members, but it should begin and end with the subject in question. To be always ready with sympathy and help is quite a different thing from seeking for influence ; in the one case you will ask for no more

confidence than is voluntarily offered, and actually needful, and you will consider the subject as forgotten when the advice is given ; in the other you will seek to draw out a great deal more confidence than is at all necessary, and, as it were, use it as the ground of gaining further. This is not acting righteously, and will defeat its own object, either by doing harm instead of good, or by being so disliked that your counsel is strictly avoided in future.

One more point I would mention, and that is, the difficulty that comes to some young minds if they are feeling more on sacred subjects than their brothers and sisters,—how they ought to manifest it. Are they true to their faith if they are silent ? are they forward and presumptuous if they speak about it ? These are questions that often disturb them. To walk righteously in your home life is the best witness you can ever make of your faith ; be not then anxious about making a profession, if “Your life is hid with Christ in God,” He will bear testimony to it in the world.

3. As regards God—godly, having renounced the Devil.

We are to live, the Apostle says, “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present life.” The first two must be dependent on the last. For this last points to that Divine life of God within the soul, which must underlie our personal and social life, without which we could not live soberly as regards ourselves, or righteously as regards others. It is that life which, in some hearts, is so faint and flickering, that it is but the smoking flax, but which in others is so strong that many waters cannot quench it. It is that life which comes from God, for our life to God is the reflex of God’s life in us. What is the whole end and object of religion ? Surely it is this

—the recovery in us of God's image lost at the Fall ; aye, and more than the recovery, for in the second Adam we are to be raised to even a higher life than we lost in the first, and when we see Him as He is we shall be more completely changed into His image than we could have ever been in Paradise. "We all," says the Apostle, "with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." For this we "are to have our robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb ;" for this we are to live "by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us ;" for this we are endued with the Spirit of God ;—for this we are to pass through "great tribulation," through the discipline of life in its manifold forms, even that we may be before the throne of God, instead of in the garden of Eden. This was the great end and object of Christ's life and death, and in and through Him the great end and object of our life and death.

"Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." This life, therefore, is begun when, renouncing the devil, we are grafted into Christ, taken into God's family at Baptism ; but we must as we grow up accept our birthright, and be able to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I have by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." We have never had one holy thought, we have never prayed one heartfelt prayer, we have never resisted one temptation to evil, from our infancy upwards, except through the Spirit of God. In ourselves, and of and by ourselves, we can do nothing good. In the Evil One can we only do evil, in God alone can we do right. Every tempt-

ation, then, to evil that in boyhood or in girlhood you have resisted, you resisted by God's Spirit,—every such resistance was a witness to you that God was calling you not only to live “soberly and righteously,” but also “godly.” Very faint and feeble may the spark of life have been, yet every such passing effort for good witnessed that it was there. The especial blessing of Baptism and Confirmation is that throughout your lives they bear a silent witness that by every right you are God's,—that you have been bought by the blood of Christ, accepted as members of Christ, and received into the family of God, and sealed with the Spirit, and are therefore bound to live godly. Some may have passed all their days more or less doing the deeds of the Evil One, caring little for God or His laws, or His Spirit, feeling that Spirit's voice ever and again within them, when they have stifled the pricking of conscience; but when they come to themselves, their first feeling is, in some form or other, that of Hedley Vicars, “If I am a cleansed man, I will live as a cleansed man should.” Reading that verse in St. John, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin,” revealed to him how infinitely below the state to which God had called him he had been living. “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?” might be asked of each soul awakened to the fact that it has been living away from God.

But I trust I am now speaking to those who, having been led by God to the choice of His service on their Confirmation morning, do desire that more and more “the life that they live in the flesh, they shall live by the faith of the Son of God;” that it shall not be choked as years go on by the thorns and thistles of the way, that it shall not grow

fainter and fainter as the earthly life grows stronger and stronger, but that it shall "increase ever more and more to the life everlasting."

Faith in Christ, into whom you have been grafted, lies at its foundation; the words of the creed, I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in His life and death, lisped in your childhood, but having a fuller, and deeper, and more personal meaning, as you grow up, are to be the words of life to you. You must know that in Him there is forgiveness for all your sins, you must know that in Him there is strength against all your temptations, and that through that forgiveness and in that strength that you shall daily be made righteous. Faith in the Holy Spirit, by whom you are sanctified, by whose Spirit your spirit is purified, so that not only are you made righteous in your outward life, but, pure in spirit, raised to a higher spiritual life, to a communion with God, lies at every step of your progress in that life. Faith in the eternal love of the Father, "a life full of the sense of God's presence," is the crowning point of a "godly" life.

How is this life to be sustained? How is it to be kept safe from the assaults of the Evil One, from the wear and tear of daily life, from the coldness of your own hearts, and from the temptations of the world around? On God's part by the gift of the indwelling Spirit now sealed to you, without whom all other means of grace are useless; on your part by Prayer, by daily work, by reading the Word of God, and by receiving the Holy Communion. "Apostacy," it has been said, "begins in the closet." If prayer—private personal prayer—is the very breath of the soul, ceasing to pray, you must before long cease to live. If the life of God in the soul is

to be but an intermittent life, then occasional prayer will satisfy you just when hard pressed, but if it is to be a real, steadfast, growing life, if you are to be changed into the same image, it can only be by continually contemplating, and holding communion with your Lord, so that at last, as years go on, a spirit of prayer and of communion with God shall pervade each day. But as you will still be living in an active and practical world,—still have to fulfil the duties of your earthly callings,—a very important help to such a life is in the full recognition of those earthly duties, as the work which God has given you to do, so that there be no schism in this life. Seeing God in your daily duties, and in your daily pleasures; seeing God in the world of nature, and seeing Him more and more as He has revealed Himself in His Word, come next after actual communion with Him as the means of sustaining His life within your hearts. More especially seeing Him in His Word, accepting that Word as the final revelation of Himself to man, in which, through many thousand years, He had been gradually withdrawing the veil, until in Christ we behold “the express image of the Father,” and the full light of the Gospel truth, bringing life and immortality to light. Accepting it as your rule of life and faith; as speaking living words of encouragement, warning, counsel, and truth to you; accepting it as that which shall “thoroughly furnish you unto all good works, and which is able to make you wise unto salvation.” Accepting it, as that which shall satisfy the deepest cravings of your heart, which shall speak peace to your greatest fears, and sympathy with your greatest joys, and which shall nourish your life day by day with its heavenly food. Reading its prophecies as the key to God’s govern-

ment of the world ; reading its histories as the histories of men and women of the same flesh and blood as ourselves, who felt as we feel, fought as we must fight, fell as we too often fall, and therefore who were to be to us real warnings or examples.

In the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, you have the highest means of sustaining that life, which the sacrifice of His Body and Blood purchased for you. In it, you feed by faith upon the Son of Man, your life is replenished by His life, you are made one with Him and He with you. In it you are lifted into the actual presence of your Lord. In it, all that you most desire is fulfilled ; you crave for sympathy, and fellowship, and communion,—round the Lord's Table you enter into communion with the whole of Christ's Church militant on earth, and rejoicing in heaven ; you crave for more life and fuller, in the Sacrament of the Lord your eternal life is assured you,—a life ever growing, and deepening, and progressing. You crave for pardon and forgiveness, in the Sacrament of the Lord they are sealed to you ; you crave for strength, steadfastness, and courage, in the Sacrament of the Lord they are imparted to you ; above all you crave for love, in the Sacrament of the Lord your largest demand is satisfied.

In the preparation for Confirmation we considered the Baptismal vow in its negative form, or the life you therein renounced ; we have now considered it in its positive form, or the life you therein accept. In both it was impossible to do more than glance at the chief heads of the subject,—to be followed out, I trust, by yourselves more fully.

There are but one or two other points more that I would mention. First, to bear in mind that not

only in Confirmation, as we have seen, but that in all ordinances, in all our thoughts of God, we are tempted to think too much of what we are to do for Him, and too little of what He does for us. In our daily private prayer, in our Bible reading, in the Church Service, in the Holy Communion, it is the same; it is our part rather than God's part that occupies our thoughts; we are perpetually thinking of ourselves as the givers rather than the receivers,—we have lost the childlike feeling of accepting without money and without price God's blessings. This is the cause of our false thoughts about prayer, of which I have spoken, and especially of our false thoughts about the Holy Communion. We think that so much depends on ourselves, so little on God; while even further, we are often more taken up with thinking of our feelings towards God than of His love to us. Not long since I heard this short account of two officers that may well illustrate this tendency of ours. They had parted in early life as men who thought and cared little about God; when they met, the younger was struck with the evident marks of mortal illness stamped on his friend's face, yet with it an expression of the peace that passeth understanding. After a time, the sick man said, "When we parted we thought nothing about God or religion, how is it with you now?" "I care a great deal about it," was the answer, "I read my Bible, and I think a great deal about God, but I can't love Him, I don't love Him, and that's the truth." "That is my case, but I know that God loves me," was the reply, which so brought home the real state of the case to the man's heart, that it awoke the very feeling he needed, and he went on his way rejoicing. Very often if we would think of how God is loving us,

of what in His ordinances He is doing for us, our love to Him, our enjoyment in them would spring up spontaneously. We do not sufficiently remember that all our religious feeling is but a response to the grace God has given ; that we do but answer to God's call to us.

Once again, seek more and more to bear in mind that the greatest help against temptation, whether personal or social, that the one thing that will most tend to make you real, true, pure, and righteous is this, to live continually in the presence of God. The thought of God brings you before Him ; the Church dedicated to Him is but the witness that the whole world is His, in crowded streets and gay assemblies, in manufactories and workshops, as well as in sick rooms, He is equally to be found. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," would often be our confession if the hearts of those with whom we mix were laid open to us, or the veil lifted from our eyes. "Surely the Lord is in this place, for I know it," may be our confession always, if only we would open to Him that stands at the door and knocks, that He may come in and abide with us. Thus we shall be ready when He once more stands and knocks, no longer to come in to abide with us, but to call us to abide with Him for ever.

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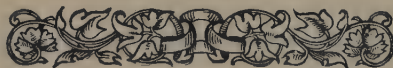
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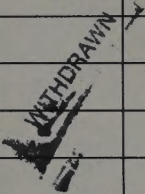
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